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ABSTRACT

This course, one of 16 sequential courses comprising phase one of a part-time Bachelor of Arts degree program in Australian Studies, uses literary authorship as an example of a highly individualized social role and shows how authorial attributions and modes of composition have changed over time. It is designed for independent study combined with tutorial sessions. Chapter 1 is an introduction to the course and its study objectives. Chapter 2, "The Sociological Study of Authorship," discusses the image of the author and how this image is a social construct. Chapter 3, "Authorship and the Transformation of the Book by Printing," covers the history of publishing. Chapter 4, "Authorship and Techniques of Composition," deals with romanticism, formulaic composition, and the evolution of authorship. Chapter 5 summarizes and concludes the course. The first tutorial session deals with the areas covered in the first three chapters; the second tutorial deals with formulaic composition, the rhetorical tradition, and the expressive image. Also included are lists of required readings, additional readings, a bibliography, and self-assessment questions. (IS)

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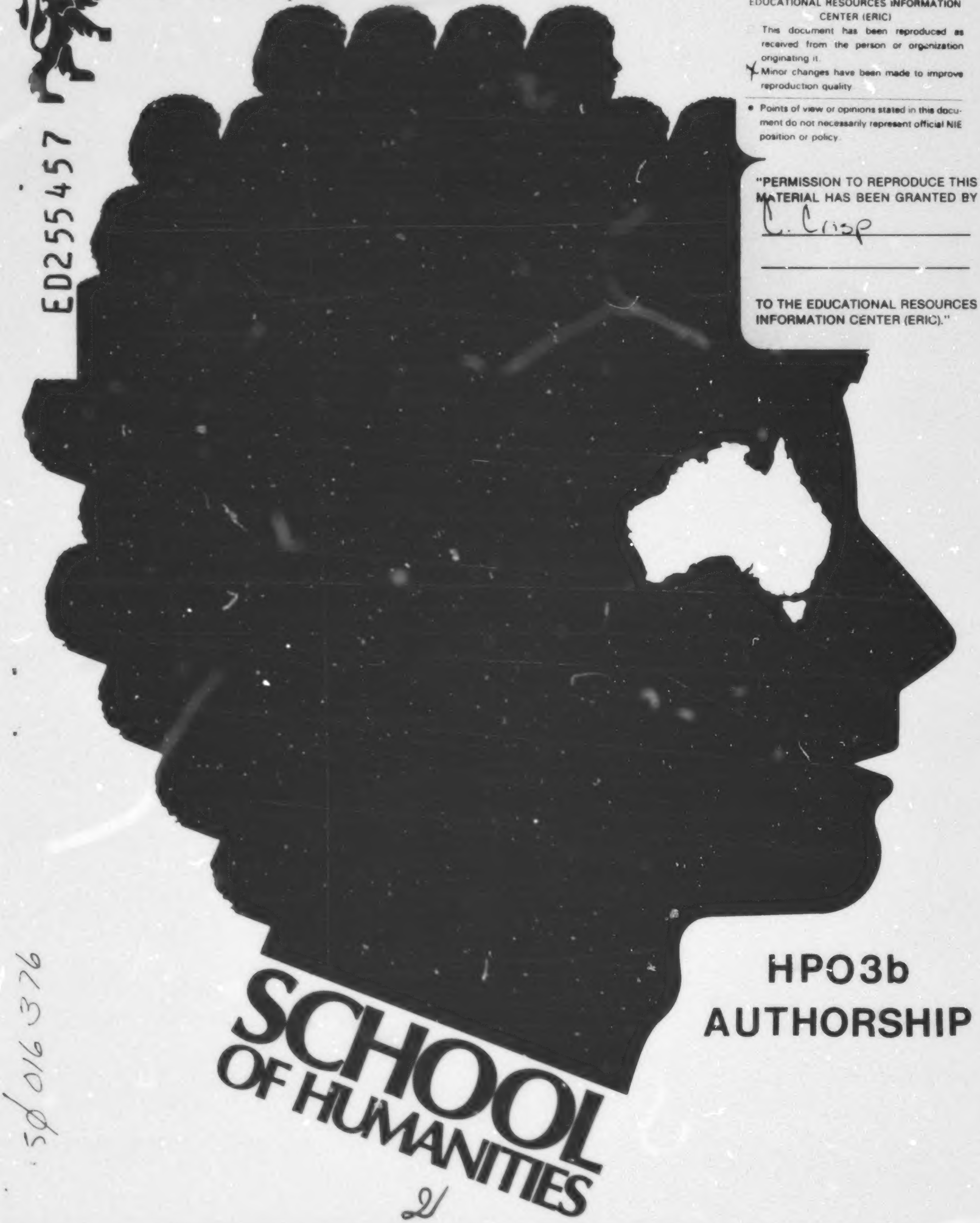

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

HP03b
AUTHORSHIP

PART TIME BA DEGREE

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

PART-TIME BA DEGREE PROGRAMME

COURSE HP03b

AUTHORSHIP

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CONTENTS

Page

Course information 1

List of readings 3

Preliminary exercise 5

1 Introduction to the course and its study objectives 6

2 The sociological study of authorship 13
2.1 Introduction 13
2.2 The expressive image of the author 13
2.2.1 The pervasiveness of the expressive image 16
2.3 Authorship as a social construction 18
2.3.1 Status and conventions: Howard Becker's sociology of the 'art-world' 21
2.3.2 The roles and statuses of authorship 24
2.3.3 Authorship as a social category and status 25

3 Authorship and the transformation of the book by printing 29
3.1 Writing and copying 29
3.2 Medieval bookmaking 32
3.3 Medieval reading 36
3.4 From script to printing 39
3.5 The emergence of the expressive image of authorship 43

TUTORIAL ONE 47

4 Authorship and techniques of composition 48
4.1 Romanticism and the expressive image 49
4.1.1 Romanticism: against rhetoric 49
4.1.2 Romanticism: in praise of the 'folk' 57
4.2 Poems without authors: Homer and formulaic composition 58
4.2.1 Homer: author or singer of tales? 58
4.2.2 The technique of formulaic composition 61
4.2.3 Formulaic composition and the Romantic image of 'folk' culture 62
4.3 Rhetoric and the commonplace tradition 64
4.3.1 What was an author? Literary tradition and authorship before Romanticism 64
4.3.2 The commonplace tradition 67
4.3.3 Rhetorical training and literary composition during the medieval and Renaissance periods 75

5 Conclusion 81

TUTORIAL TWO 85

Bibliography 86

Further reading 88

Answers to Self-Assessment Questions 89

Chronology 102

COURSE INFORMATION: HP03b

Course readings

The set book for the course is:

Paul Hirst and Penny Woolley, *Social Relations and Human Attributes* (Tavistock, 1982) (current price $14.95)

(You may also wish to refer back to course HP03a *Community and Control* and Erving Goffman's *Asylums*.)

Although we shall use only a small part of it, the set book will be needed for subsequent courses. We have selected from it material on the consequences of printing on authorship. However, as the overall perspective of the book is close to the approach to authorship adopted in this course, it would be useful if you also read the Preface. Don't worry if you encounter difficult material elsewhere in the book: no part of it will be discussed without appropriate preparation and commentary.

Unlike previous courses, therefore, course HP03b *Authorship* is not focussed around one or more central texts or scholarly authority. This reflects the fact that 'authorship' is not a standard topic in the undergraduate curriculum of the Social Sciences and Humanities. Furthermore, our treatment of authorship in the course in turn departs from that found in existing histories and sociologies of literature. These departures from practice are justified by the historical and theoretical material which this topic allows us to assemble under one heading.

The absence of text books on authorship means that the study guide carries a proportionately greater burden of the argument. The distribution of emphasis between study guide and readings varies according to the extent to which the readings convey the argument of the course by themselves, without need of elaborate explanation, filling-in of detail, or criticism by the study guide. Quite often (e.g. in the case of readings 3 and 4) the readings play an illustrative role with respect to the arguments in the study guide. In other cases (e.g. readings 6, 10 and 11) it is the readings which make the running, the study guide functioning more like a 'Master of Ceremonies', linking the readings and directing attention to key points through summaries and SAQs. It is important, therefore, not to assume that a topic treated only briefly in the study guide is less important on that account.

A final reassurance. Don't be concerned if you have not read the literary works referred to in the text. For section 4.2, you might usefully look up a copy of Homer's *Odyssey* and, without even reading it through, simply get an idea of what sort of animal it is (e.g. its subject matter, its length); but none of the sociological knowledge you will acquire here about this type of poetry depends upon your having studied it as poetry.

Chronology

A very general diagram of the chronology (or time-line) of the periods discussed in course HP03b *Authorship* has been included at the back of this study guide. This will prove very useful for your work in the course.

Tutorial activities

There are two tutorial sessions in this course (see pp.47 and 85).

Assessment

The assessment for course HP03b *Authorship* is a two-part item. The first part entails the collection of a small dossier of statements about authorship. The second part consists of a set of short essay questions.

LIST OF READINGS

Readings are numbered in order of use, and aggregated according to the section of the study guide in which they first appear.

(Note: This list does not include readings from the purchased text book.)

Section 2 (pink cover)

Reading 1. George Orwell, 'Why I write'

Reading 2. Howard Becker, 'Art as collective action' (excerpts)

Section 3 (cream cover)

Reading 3. David Diringer, *The Hand-Produced Book* (excerpts)

Reading 4. Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book* (excerpts)

Reading 5. Henry Chaytor, *From Script to Print* (excerpts)

Reading 6. Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (excerpts)

Section 4 (yellow cover)

Reading 7. Meyer Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (excerpts)

Reading 8. Meyer Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (excerpts)

Reading 9. Peter Burke, 'The discovery of the people' (excerpts)

Reading 10. Albert Lord, 'Singers: performance and training' (excerpts)

Reading 11. Albert Lord, 'The formula' (excerpts)

Reading 12. Ernst Curtius, 'Literature, education and the traditional author' (excerpts)

Reading 13. Hanna Gray, 'Renaissance humanism: the pursuit of eloquence' (excerpts)

Reading 14. Ernst Curtius, 'Study of rhetoric' (excerpts)

Reading 15. Walter Ong, 'Oral residue in Tudor prose style' (excerpts)

Reading 16. Walter Ong, 'Tudor writings on rhetoric, poetic and literary theory' (excerpts)

Reading 17. Ernst Curtius, 'Rhetorical poetry' (excerpts)

Reading 18. Sister Joan Lechner, *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplace* (excerpts)

Section 5 (blue cover)

Reading 19. Osborne Hardison, *The Enduring Monument: A Study of the Ideas of Praise in Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice* (excerpts)

PRELIMINARY EXERCISE

The following exercise acts as a means of recognising that the question 'What is an author?' will repay historical and sociological investigation.

Certain 'commonsense' assumptions about authorship may turn out to be false. Others remain true, but possibly for unexpected reasons.

Answer YES, NO or NOT SURE to the following questions:

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
1. Is every writer an author?			
2. Is every piece of literature in principle attributable to an author?			
3. Should Homer, the individual who composed the famous Greek epic poem the *Iliad*, be regarded as its author?			
4. Is what distinguishes 'great' from minor or 'hack' writers always their original contribution to literature, science, etc.?			
5. Does originality in literature always mean breaking with current literary conventions?			
6. Is a work of literature conceived as a means for getting across a preconceived moral or political message bound to fail as a work of art?			
7. Is 'copyright' a legal institution aimed at protecting authors' literary property (the products of their creative activity) from piracy and plagiarism?			

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE AND ITS STUDY OBJECTIVES

Rationale and content of the course

This course is a sociological study of variations in the way authorship has been defined in the history of European literature. The purpose of the course is

1. to demonstrate that the definition of authorship which prevails in Australia today, and in modern Western societies in general, is of relatively recent origin
2. to show, as a corollary, how at other times in history people have thought of authorship in very different terms
3. to enable you, by putting authorship in this historical perspective, to identify and examine modern assumptions about authorship (e.g. as in a book review or publisher's 'blurb').

The nature of authorship is not usually thought to be an obvious problem in need of study; consequently, the rationale for studying it in this degree programme will now be clarified.

Why is authorship an appropriate topic for study at this stage of the degree programme? What does it mean to study authorship and its history sociologically? Finally, in a degree programme primarily concerned with Australia and the modern world, what is the point of learning how authorship was viewed in the days of Homer and Shakespeare?

The previous course, HP03a *Community and Control*, took up an established problem in sociological enquiry, namely, how individuals relate to the social institutions and activities which shape and surround them. In particular, course HP03a *Community and Control* (e.g. in studying Goffman's *Asylums*) introduced you to the idea that social activities and social institutions generate roles and statuses to which individuals are assigned. The problem of the relationship between 'the individual' and 'society' was posed as a question of the relationships of individuals to the roles - the duties, publicly-defined and expected patterns of conduct, feeling and thought - which are imposed upon them by dint of their membership (voluntary or otherwise) of a particular community, be it a mental hospital or a scientific research team. This question now receives a further airing in relation to the occupation, or role, of authorship. On the one hand authorship is a social pursuit. Authorship today is heavily dependent upon publishing institutions, and the formation of a reading public by means of book reviews, academic literary criticism and other types of publicity. On the other hand, literary composition is a classic example of an individual activity. A novel of recognised literary worth is habitually distinguished from technical writing, such as a do-it-yourself manual, as being the work of an individual author's creative imagination. According to popular belief, the author embodies the attributes associated with 'being an individual': creativity, originality, unconventionality, intellectual independence and the capacity for self-expression. In particular, to the extent that authorship is understood as a creative activity, it is thought to exemplify a certain independence from social conventions and constraints.

So, a preliminary answer to the first question is to say that we are interested in authorship insofar as authors and their attributes represent, in our society, an exemplary type of individuality. We want to estimate whether and to what extent this authorial individuality is itself shaped by social factors. That is to say, the course raises some questions about the commonsense view of the author as somehow independent of or rising above social conventions and constraints by investigating some unfamiliar social dimensions of authorship. In other words, is an author a 'true' individual who evades or resists social roles, or is authorship, including its individualistic aspects, *itself* a bundle of social roles? We will be concerned less with the more obvious external circumstances, the social conditions and institutions which surround and constrain the activity of authorship - such as financial arrangements between writers and publishers, or a system of political censorship - than with certain social factors which directly shape the author's work, which are active *within* the process of literary composition itself.

At first sight this seems an unlikely concern. Everyone will admit that literary composition is constrained by economic and political - i.e., 'social' considerations. But the activity of literary 'creation' *itself*, surely this is an intensely 'individual' matter; and if it is to be studied, surely this is the province of a literary historian or critic, or an English literature course? How could it be a sociologist's business? What significant knowledge can be gleaned about Homer's or Shakespeare's methods of composition without having read and studied their works *as* poetry or drama?

There are two brief answers to these doubts which will be further clarified as the course proceeds.

1. What makes authorship an 'individual' matter is that it is a solo activity which depends on the exercise of *individual capacities*. One of the general lessons of sociological knowledge is that individual attributes such as skills - including the 'artistic skills' exercised by authors working alone at their desks - may be *socially constructed* and endowed on individuals. Time and again in this degree programme you will see the need to break the commonsense intellectual habit of thinking of 'the individual' - of our own individuality - as something intrinsically *opposed to or independent*

of 'society'. The 'solo' activity of authorship and the individual skills involved are not therefore out of bounds to sociological enquiry. The most important general concept to be grasped in this course, then, is this idea of authorship as a social construction. In other words, from the perspective in which this course is written, to study authorship sociologically means to study ways in which the capacities and activities involved in being an author, and even the 'personality' of the author, are formed and shaped by social factors.

It should be acknowledged, however, that the discipline of sociology is riven by fundamental disagreements, for example, as to how sociological enquiry ought to be conducted, and how social facts should be interpreted. For instance, the perspective in course HP03b on authorship and individuality (which closely corresponds to that of Hirst and Woolley) differs markedly from course HP03a *Community and Control*. The basis of these theoretical disagreements do not concern us at this point in the degree programme. But it is important that you always keep in mind that what you are learning as you go through the course are arguments, with (arguably) a good measure of truth in them, but not unquestionable truths.

So how, from the perspective of this course, can a sociological enquiry get a grip on authorial literary composition?

2. The simplest way to begin thinking about authorship sociologically is to picture it by means of a certain metaphor. The most common metaphor for authorship is the metaphor of creation. Just as God 'created' the universe, so (it is assumed) the author 'creates' a literary masterpiece. But what if we were to picture the author not as a (creative) artist but instead, and perhaps more realistically, as a (skilled) artisan, as someone who makes or produces something? Novels, plays, books of poetry would then have to be thought of as the material products of some definite social activity. Not all societies 'have' writing. Without writing, there can be no books produced. No books, no authors. To start with, then, we have to think of authors as people who (in certain societies) 'make' books, just as in some societies there are people called carpenters who 'make' furniture. Books and furniture are equally material, social artefacts.

To conceive of the author as an artisan, as a maker of books, and to think of books as artefacts or 'artificially' produced objects is simple enough. Yet it involves a decisive shift away from the conventional image of the author as a creator of books. God created the universe *ex nihilo* - i.e., from nothing, instantaneously. The question 'how is it made?' cannot arise in respect to the 'miracle' of creation. It is the same with the creative author. Only when we think of an author as a producer, and the products of authorship as artefacts, can such a question be asked. A producer can only make something out of something else, i.e., from some raw materials. These could range from dreams and passing thoughts to bits and pieces of contemporary general knowledge, esoteric facts, observations of places and events or snatches of conversation recorded in a notebook as well as plots and figures of speech gleaned from the author's own reading. In this picture, all these diverse raw materials are then transformed and cobbled together to form a finished product, say, a novel, by means of a definite set of skills and rules of composition.

This metaphor of the author as the producer of a social artefact is suggested for methodological reasons. That is, it is not intended to imply that the image of the creative author is a total myth to be replaced by a truer image.

This metaphor of the author as the producer of a social artefact allows us to approach the topic of authorship from two sociological angles. Either we can begin with the end product of authorial activity, i.e., with the material appearance and form of books. Or we can concentrate on the process of composition of a work of literature, i.e., posing the question: how is a poem, say, actually made?

The distinction between process and product provides the key to how this course is organised, as the following outline indicates.

1. Section 2 - 'The sociological study of authorship'

This section gives a brief introduction to the main characteristics of the modern image of authorship and the method of approach to authorship adopted here.

This leads on to the heart of the course which falls into two main sections. Each section revolves around a historical contrast. The first concerns the product or artefact of authorship (the book) whilst the second concentrates on the question of how an 'artistic' work of literature is produced (on the process of composition).

2. Section 3 - 'Authorship and the transformation of the book by printing'

The first historical contrast is developed in this section. This contrast involves an examination of changes in the physical products of intellectual activity (particularly books) that distinguish the modern book produced in the age of print from the book produced in the medieval period, that is, in the period of Western history between the civilisations of Ancient Greece and Rome and the

Renaissance of the fifteenth century. We shall be more concerned with the later part of the medieval period, which saw the flowering of a medieval culture after the 'Dark Ages' (or early medieval period) that followed the eclipse of the Roman Empire. (A chronology, or time-line, on the last page of this study guide will help you to sort out the different periods mentioned.) Changes in the production and form of books exerted an impact on the status and social functions of authorship. We shall be investigating historical factors which explain:

(a) how the modern self-expressive image of the author and the value placed on originality, individuality and critical independence came into existence; and

(b) how, once this modern image was established, the old art of rhetoric began to be discredited.

The course thus compares traditional views of the writing of literary works with the modern view of literary writing as an ideal instance of individual self-expression.

3. Section 4 - 'Authorship and techniques of composition'

Here we explore the second historical contrast: some historical variations in images of the process of literary composition. The image of literary composition today centres on the creative activity of authors - they express their feelings and thoughts in their work. But this 'expressive' image of literary composition has not always existed.

For a considerable period, literary composition was regarded less as a mysterious process of creativity than as a technical skill in which one could be trained. It was taken not as the expression of an individual's unique and original imaginative processes, but as the reworking of a traditional body of knowledges, themes, sayings, grammatical constructions, phrases and styles. This is the view of the traditional art of rhetoric, where the image of the author as an expressive individual does not fit.

Now that some sociological reasons for studying authorship, and the main content of the course have been outlined, the reason for our focus on historical forms of authorship should be a little clearer. The reason for studying the form of medieval books or the role of rhetoric in teaching Renaissance authors how to write is to provide ourselves with a series of surprising empirical contrasts with modern processes and products of authorship. These contrasts enable us to see that, at the very least, the modern definition of authorship is, firstly, not the only one possible and, secondly, a relatively recent historical phenomenon. The contrastive exercise involved here is by no means unique to this course. On the contrary, such contrasts are built into your degree which consists in comparative no less than Australian studies.

Course objectives

The chief objectives of the course, therefore, are:

1. To establish the historical character of the modern expressive image of the author by examining earlier forms of the book and prior concepts of literary compositions.

2. To question a key feature of the expressive image of the author, namely, the assumption that in literature, innovation and convention, the creative and the commonplace, are in opposition. According to this assumption, social and artistic conventions are an obstacle to great artistic achievements. This assumption of a necessary conflict between invention and convention coincides in part with the 'liberal-individualist' view of the individual which was mentioned in the preceding course. In questioning this view, this course suggests the potential of an approach to the study of social relations in which it is not assumed that social conventions necessarily repress individuals' powers and capacities for independent action.

In pursuing these objectives, the course will outline three separate, but interconnecting, sociological perspectives on the study of authorship.

1. Firstly, we shall be concerned with the respects in which authorship, like any other social activity, can be studied as a form of production. This will entail considering the ways in which different forms of literary composition can be regarded as being socially organised, not just by external social factors, but by social forces which intervene within and shape the very process of composition itself.

2. Secondly, we shall examine a series of social and historical changes and variations concerning the ways in which the social role of authorship is organised and conceived. This will involve a consideration of the ways in which the rights, duties, obligations and status associated with authorship have varied, particularly between the medieval period and the forms of authorship which have prevailed in Western societies since the nineteenth century.

3. Finally, we shall consider the social consequences associated with the ways in which the concept of authorship (in its contemporary usage) functions as a principle of classification which distinguishes some forms of writing and writers from others and, in the process, invests them with a particular value: of 'great literature', for example.

Clearly, in practice, these different aspects of the sociological approach to authorship overlap considerably with one another. The way in which the concept of authorship functions as a principle of classification may affect how the role of authorship is organised and conceived in a period which, in turn, may have a bearing on the process of literary composition. Nonetheless, you may find it helpful to keep these three sets of issues in mind as you work your way through the study guide.

2 THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF AUTHORSHIP

2.1 Introduction

This section has the following aims:

1. To describe and illustrate the dominant modern conception of literary authorship, which throughout the course will be termed 'the expressive image of the author'. The description provides the point of departure for the historical contrasts made in the following sections.

2. To draw up some simple guidelines for studying authorship sociologically and historically. These arise out of a consideration of aspects of authorship in modern times which do not readily dove-tail with the expressive image of the author. These aspects of authorship consequently point to the inadequacy of the expressive image as a general model for understanding the activity of authorship, and in particular for a sociological understanding of authorship as a social construction.

2.2 The expressive image of the author

In what sense can the dominant 'commonsense' conception of literary authorship be described as expressive? According to the popular image, a 'serious' or 'important' work of literature is conceived as the written expression of a creative individual's original thoughts, perceptions and feelings. Just as people are said to 'express themselves' in their work, or in the way they decorate their homes, so creative writers 'express' their personalities, their distinctive ways of experiencing the world in a literary work - a poem, short story, play or novel. The very word 'novel' conveys something concerning the element of originality with which a 'good' novel is expected to be endowed. And the genre of the novel indeed emerged at approximately the same point in history as did the expressive image of authorship.

This notion of the creative personality is first elaborated, as we shall see, in the image of the artist constructed by the Romantic movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For now, five attributes of this expressive image of authorship may be distinguished:

1. Originality. Authors are valued as original to the extent that they produce something strange, new, hitherto unheard of. The particular way this originality is valued implies

   (a) an antithesis between the conventional and the innovative components of literature; originality on this view means breaking with conventions

(b) a conflict between a work of art and a didactic work, i.e., writing that takes literature as a means for conveying a message that could equally well be expressed in a pamphlet.

2. Individuality. The 'greatness' of a work is typically attributable to the native genius of individual authors, held in various ways to be set apart from their fellows, whether by choice or necessity. This manifests in an extreme way the modern conception of the isolated consciousness, unable to be at home in a society of stultifying rules and conventions.

3. Independence. If art is the product of an individual's creative spirit, then any dependence upon social conditions, conventions, or ties will appear as a constraint. Independence has the following two main dimensions:

   (a) An external dimension. Social histories of literature emphasise the writer's fight to secure financial and political independence and maintain artistic integrity - freedom from the dictates of princes and government censorship or freedom from dependence upon a patron. Such histories also consider the economic and legal developments which permitted authorship to emerge as an independent profession; for instance, payment of royalties to authors allowed them to make a bid for financial independence on the basis of selling their work to a reading public.

   A slightly more elaborated example will clarify what is meant by external conditions of independence. The feminist polemic, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), by English novelist Virginia Woolf, was concerned with the ways in which 'creative' writing by women was obstructed by their economic dependence on husbands and by the burdens of homemaking. This situation, she argued, could only be redressed by women securing privacy and financial independence ('a room of her own and five hundred a year'). These social and economic conditions she held to be a prerequisite for women to be able to pursue creative writing. They are 'enabling conditions' insofar as they make writing by women possible. They do not directly shape the work itself, and to that extent they remain external to artistic activity, however important they may be.

   (b) An internal (or intellectual) dimension. The independence of authors generates the expectation that they will adopt a critical attitude to their society and its conventions. This critical independence attaches to the image of authorship even when an author's work cannot be read as direct social or political criticism. It can equally be associated with the gesture of turning away from social and political concerns in favour of a concern with 'pure' art, as in the nineteenth-century 'art for art's sake' movement.

4. Authority. Literary authorship enjoys a particular moral authority, tied partly to modern valuations of individual difference (of which the literary author is an exemplary case). This authority is related to the supposed capacity of literary writers to articulate a total vision of their society and of the human condition. In this respect, the author occupies a place in society akin to that once occupied by the Christian church, with its claims to purvey a higher moral truth.

   Examples of this moral authority are not hard to find. In 1982 a book came out in England entitled *The Falklands Crisis: Authors Take Sides*. Celebrated literary figures were invited to give their views on the war between Argentina and Great Britain. They were invited not on account of their knowledge of military strategy or international diplomacy, the current political situation in Argentina or the history of the Falklands as a colonial possession, but because it was assumed by publishers and by the editor of the collection that a broad reading public is interested in the attitudes of noted authors to issues of the day. This interest presupposes that authors have a capacity to express the moral aspects of the crisis that underlie more limited specialised or technical (political, diplomatic, strategic) aspects.

5. Veracity. The capacity to tell the truth, to capture the concrete detail of a situation, the feeling of 'being there', is assumed to be related to the moral authority attributed to authorship. This veracity is also related to the idea that the mark of a great author is to 'break through' conventions of language and style and appropriate subject-matter in order to 'tell it like it really is'. Reading 1, 'Why I write' by George Orwell clearly illustrates this attribute of veracity.

This list of authorial attributes is not exhaustive. Nor are these attributes equally present in every work. The qualities valued in a novelist, for example, the capacity to tell a good story, would not be expected of a poet. Even where this talent for story-telling is valued, it cannot serve to distinguish serious authors from others, such as popular romance writers.

In both sections 3 and 4, the most important of these expressive attributes for the purposes of historical contrast is undoubtedly the first - originality. The second course objective (to demonstrate that convention and literary inventiveness are not necessarily in opposition to one another - see p.11) clearly entails questioning this attribute. But the other attributes are also picked up as points of departure for making historical contrasts. For example, sections 3.3-3.4 identify some social prerequisites for the acquisition of the attribute of independence in the more internal sense - intellectual independence of mind, or what we call a 'critical attitude'. Section 3.5 explores some of the historical factors responsible for the 'individualising' of authorship. Sections 4.1.1 and 4.3.2 illustrate the sharply contrasting grounds on which literary writers in medieval and Renaissance times were endowed with moral authority and social prestige as bearers of knowledge and truth.

It is not necessary to follow up these references now; just make a note of them as aids to completing the final assignment.

2.2.1 The pervasiveness of the expressive image

Having described in a fairly formal way the main attributes of the expressive image of the author, the time has come to illustrate the pervasive use of this image in contemporary thinking and writing about literary authors. The expressive image of the author circulates in society in many different ways. The illustrations of the five attributes of authorship which follow are drawn from book reviews in newspapers, publishers' 'blurbs' and finally authors writing about themselves and about other authors.

The 'blurbs' on the back of paperback novels, particularly the more serious kind, and the book-review pages of the *Weekend Australian* or *Courier-Mail*, are fertile sources of expressive images of authorship. What you have to ask yourself as you peruse these is this: in what terms is a book and/or its author praised or criticised by a 'blurb' writer or book reviewer? What, in other words, are the reviewer's assumptions about what makes a good book? What are the reviewers' criteria of excellence in an author? You won't have to read too many reviews before you spot the same criteria of literary/authorial excellence being used again and again, in review after review. Obviously such reading is useful preparation for the first part of the assignment.

The 'blurb' accompanying the Penguin Modern Classics edition of Italo Svevo, *Confessions of Zeno*, illustrates the importance of the first of the attributes listed above in publicising a book:

> 'One of the most original artists of an original generation'. V.S. Pritchett in the *New Statesman*.
>
> James Joyce discovered Italo Svevo in Trieste. His encouragement led to the writing of the *Confessions of Zeno*, a masterpiece which gradually won an international reputation for its author.
>
> This was the first considerable novel to employ, however ironically, Freud's methods as a framework, and the book is represented as being published by an analyst to annoy his patient.

What can we learn from this passage?

1. First and foremost this extract illustrates the simple use of originality as a term of praise: notice how even derivative elements of the book, e.g. the Freudian psychoanalytical framework, are creatively ('ironically') transformed in their literary use.

2. Notice also, however, the different ways in which this judgement of Svevo's originality is authorised. This particular 'blurb' was chosen on the assumption that most students of this course would not have heard of this European author. The 'blurb' writer makes a similar assumption. The purpose is to construct an English-speaking audience for the translation of the book. To this end, the first explicit judgement of originality is attributed to V.S. Pritchett, himself a noted author as well as critic. This is followed up by a second, tacit, reference to Svevo's originality, viz. his encouragement by James Joyce, probably the most celebrated twentieth-century 'modernist' author. This is an indication of how the expressive image of the author circulates: the 'blurb' carries a quotation from a weekly news journal's review columns and a testimony from two other 'big-name' authors. These authorial names act as signals telling prospective readers that *Confessions of Zeno* is the work of a comparably great author. The social significance of the author's name will be further examined in section 2.3 below.

   A further common assumption of literary reviewers and critics is that a great work of literature is an expression of the correspondingly admirable mind and temperament of the unique individual who composed it. Thus, two well-known English critics, Edmund Wilson and F.L. Lucas, state their criteria for literary greatness as follows:

   > The real elements ... of any work of fiction, are the elements of the author's personality: his imagination embodies in the images of characters, situations and scenes the fundamental conflicts of his nature or the cycle of phases through which it habitually passes. His personages are personifications of the author's various impulses and emotions ... (Wilson, cited Abrams, 1953, p.228)
   >
   > I have found by spontaneous experience more and more that even the aesthetic pleasure of a poem depends for me on the fineness of the personality glimpsed between its lines ... (Lucas, cited Abrams, 1953, p.227)

We come now to our first reading which is an essay by the well-known author and critic, George Orwell. In it he examines his own development and work as an author.

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Read George Orwell, 'Why I write', reading 1.

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SAQ 1

1. Look along your bookshelves or in newspapers for 'blurbs' and reviews which illustrate this emphasis on originality (or the lack of it) as a criterion of greatness in an author.
2. In order to further test how much you have understood of the attributes associated with the expressive image of the author, re-read reading 1 and mark passages or phrases which conform to the types of authorial attribute outlined above. Initialling in the margin ('O' for originality etc.) might be the quickest method.

2.3 Authorship as a social construction

In our Introduction (section 1 above) it was suggested that a useful first step towards a sociological investigation into the social aspects of authorship was to think of the author not as an artist, but as an artisan, a maker of books. This shift of image immediately suggests two further steps. These emerge from considering two closely related and problematic characteristics of the expressive image of the author: its singularity and its ideal character. Authorship viewed this way is essentially one thing, this single 'essence' of authorship being defined by means of the ideal, indeed, quasi-divine, image of the creative artist. Let us firstly examine its singular character and the implications of rejecting this postulate.

You may have noticed that the class of people to whom the image applies is highly restricted, not merely to the class of authors, but to authors of 'serious', i.e., creative, literature. Doubts concerning the idea of a single image of authorship speedily arise when we consult the dictionary.

Collins English Dictionary contains the following definitions of author:

1. A person who composes a book, article or other written work
2. A person who writes books as a profession; writer
3. The writings of such a person (reviewing a post-war author)

4. An originator or creator (the author of this plan)

5. To write or originate.

What do these current definitions of the word 'author' add up to? One thing is clear: they suggest no single image of authorship. For example, definition 2 identifies an author as one who writes books for a living, whereas definition 4 identifies an author as an originator, without qualification. So you could be the 'author' of any object or action whatsoever.

This discrepancy matters. In some contexts, e.g. in criminal law, any adult person who is *compos mentis* may be charged with being the 'author' of a certain deed, i.e., a crime. In other contexts it is clear that the set of authors is restricted to professional writers. This discrepancy between restricted and unrestricted senses of the word 'author' is nicely exploited in the old film *Les Enfants du Paradis*. In the film we see a melodrama produced for a rowdy music-hall theatre. A murder takes place on the stage. When a character in the play declaims 'Who are the authors of this terrible act?', the theatre-owner's rival interrupts the performance by standing up in his theatre box, pointing ostentatiously towards the playwright and producer sitting in the box opposite and shouting 'They are!'. But this discrepancy between restricted and unrestricted senses of the word 'author' is not the only discrepancy in these definitions.

SAQ 2

1. What is the discrepancy between definitions 1 and 2 of 'author as listed above?

2. What is the further discrepancy between definitions 2 and 4 of 'author' as listed above?

The restriction implicit in the notion of 'creator', with its divine connotations of producing something new out of nothing and its association with artistic creativity should now be clear. The 'originator' of a sewerage plan for a particular town would not ordinarily be thought of as creative. The narrower definition of 'creator' was, of course, assumed in the distinction between 'serious' or artistic writers and others. These 'others' could in turn be subdivided into:

(a) those who produce technical works, such as taxation guides or carpentry manuals

(b) those who produce works of popular entertainment, such as writers of 'pulp' fiction, popular journalists, or makers of pornographic films

(c) those who merely 'comment' on works of serious literature, such as book reviewers or literary critics.

According to this classification, 'serious' authors produce original work of recognised artistic, scientific or intellectual merit. We must, of course, be alert to the historical variability of this classification. Authors and works which were once assigned to one or the 'other', inferior, categories sometimes come to be recognised as having literary worth; for example, the thrillers of Raymond Chandler. Certain critical writings can likewise be reclassified as writing of literary merit.

Thus, while our concern is with literary authorship, we should not exclude consideration of authors of works in other categories of writing. Just as literary writers do not enjoy a monopoly over the title of 'author', so in copyright legislation the term 'author' applies not only to 'creators' of literary works but also to film directors and composers of music. 'Inventors' in patent law also count as authors, as we shall see.

Focussing on the variety of types of author places a question mark not only against the idea of a simple image of authorship but also against depicting authorship in *ideal* terms. Why is this the case?

If we are to study authorship sociologically, i.e., to view the activity and person of the author as socially constructed, a useful third step is to remove 'serious' authors from their pedestal and place them alongside other types of authors, other makers of books, who may or may not be deemed 'creative'. From a sociological perspective the problem with the expressive image of the author, to the extent that it involves viewing the author as a 'creator', is that it encourages the assumption that only serious writers are truly authors; 'authors' of cheap thrillers or carpentry manuals somehow failing to come up to the authorial ideal. The other side of the same coin is that we are thereby encouraged to neglect all the characteristics which 'great' authors have in common with their 'lesser' brethren. For instance, all authors are subject to the same *copyright law*, an extremely important aspect of authorship touched upon in section 3 below. There we will see that for purposes of law, original works of literature and do-it-yourself manuals are not distinguished. And to that extent, neither are their authors.

Finding the expressive image of authorship inadequate for the purposes of defining authorship sociologically does not entail either regarding it as a myth, or disregarding its practical importance - not least in motivating authors themselves. Rather, setting aside any singular and relatedly ideal images of authorship simply makes us more sensitive to the *multi-faceted* character of authorship. In other words, 'author' is a term which covers many different things. The main point of what follows for the sociological study of authorship is to enable us to appreciate this diversity.

2.3.1 Status and conventions: Howard Becker's sociology of the 'art-world'

If there are many types of author, there is an even greater diversity of people who write (e.g. secretaries), or who are involved in the production of books (e.g. publishers), but who are not thought of as authors. Reading 2, Howard Becker's 'Art as collective action', to which we now turn, provides a useful understanding of the idea that whether or not someone who writes or paints or composes can be termed an author is partly a question of whether they and their works conform to certain social codes and conventions. Howard Becker's article attempts to draw up guidelines for the study of the world of art and artists. We have already noted that in some (e.g. legal) contexts artists are regarded as the 'authors' of their work; and what is the expressive image of authorship doing if not depicting authors as great artists? The terms 'author' and 'artist' are consequently interchangeable, at least where Becker's general arguments are concerned.

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Read Howard Becker, 'Art as collective action' (excerpts), reading 2.

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The three main points of Becker's article are as follows:

1. It introduces the idea that the production of a work of art (such as the making of a book) is always the result of a joint effort involving many different sorts of personnel and skills, and a particular division of labour between them. It takes more than an author to make a book.

2. It introduces the key sociological idea that 'author' is a variable social status attributed to certain individuals rather than others.

3. It points to the central importance of the conventional ingredients of artistic compositions. By 'conventions' is simply meant elements of an artistic composition not invented by the artist. Conventions are indispensable not only to the work of composition itself but to the possibility of exhibiting or circulating the work, and not least to its public intelligibility.

The aspects of Becker's argument which will be further developed and illustrated in this course can be summarised as follows:

1. He demonstrates that the production of a work of art is caught up in a complex network of social and technical activities and conventions: the genre of the work, the activity of publishers (in turning a scrappy manuscript into a printed product) and the dissemination of works to a wide audience.

2. Becker shows that there is no answer to the question of who makes the specifically 'artistic' contribution in the production of a work, and who merely provides the 'technical' back-up service to this contribution. On the contrary, the term 'artist' names a prestigious social status which may be conferred on different members of the same co-operative network at different times. Thus, whilst calligraphy was an intrinsic part of the art of poetry in ancient Chinese verse, in the Western context today the contribution of the printer to the production of a book of poetry would be considered to be purely technical. The point is that this status of artistic activity is conferred through social institutions and conventions.

3. Finally, Becker provides a useful indication of the procedures and techniques in which an artist must be trained in order to produce a work of art (and in which audiences must be trained in order to appreciate its artistic effects).

One reason for getting you to read this text is that it specifically sets out to question the notion of art as a purely individual creation. In its reference to 'division of labour', Becker's reading recapitulates the first step which we work towards for a sociological perspective on authorship, namely viewing the author as a producer rather than as a creator. However, Becker's challenge to the identification of art with the work of the creative individual is not as complete as one would wish from course HP03b's perspective. He ultimately retains an expressive image of art in a way which is arguably open to criticism.

SAQ 3

Cast your eye back over the attributes of the expressive image of the author discussed in sections 2.2 and 2.2.1 above. Then re-read Becker's article and briefly note down two respects in which he adheres to the expressive view of authorship.

In spite of its helpfulness in guiding us towards a sociological analysis of the world of art (and authorship), Becker's approach is open to the following objections.

He assumes that everything we call a work of art can in principle be attributed to the creative activity of an individual artist. That the individual creator depends on a network of support personnel and that the status of 'artist' and 'support personnel' is socially defined and variable, does not alter the fact that, for Becker, someone must always be cast in the role of creative artist. That this is not necessarily so will become apparent in the following section when we examine the 'division of labour' involved in the production of a handwritten book in the days before printing was invented.

Becker's argument manifests the bias against anything savouring of convention which is built into the expressive image of the author. It is assumed that conventions are antithetical to the creative process which is identified precisely with breaking free from conventions.

In fact, this idea of art as the break with conventions is relatively recent, originating in the literary theory of the Romantic movement which we shall comment on in section 4.1. This movement established the social expectation that the artist's vocation is to pursue the unconventional and the extraordinary. Thus, there is a lack of historical perspective in Becker's account of artists flouting conventions. It is also worth repeating that an artist who does flout conventions may simply be following another set of conventions. Avant-garde art could well seem to apply a rigid rule - for any given artistic convention, do the opposite!

Becker reduces social relations to human interactions (past and present 'agreements', consensual definitions). He gives the example of the artist who wishes to break free of the confines of art galleries in order to construct massive earthworks. Even if we agreed on the desirability of such activity, other factors would decide its feasibility besides the division of labour and the conventions that, for Becker, are the consequence of consensual or inter-subjective definitions alone. In this case, the availability or non-availability of the financial resources required to equip state-subsidised artists with earthmovers instead of paint brushes would be an obvious example.

In short, Becker persists in identifying true art with the creative work of an individual. And he maintains an essential opposition between creation and convention. You will recall that one of the primary objectives of this course is to question this opposition by showing it to be particular to a relatively recent historical context.

Before embarking on the historical contrasts which demonstrate this point, let us now develop some final guidelines for the study of authorship as a social construction which build on the strengths of Becker's position while avoiding its weaknesses. These guidelines are mostly drawn from a short but difficult article by Michel Foucault (pronounced Foo-Co) 'What is an author?'. The article has been included in the list of Further

Reading. It must be stressed that the article is strictly optional: an understanding of the (much simplified) exposition of Foucault's approach which follows is all that is really needed in order to complete the course successfully.

2.3.2 The roles and statuses of authorship

The general aim of a sociological study of authorship could be defined as a concern with the diverse aspects of authorship which are socially constructed and therefore independent of the alleged 'creative personality' of the individual whose name appears on the title-page of a book.

Following Foucault, we may treat the author as a figure that is socially constructed in three related ways:

1. As a name - 'the-name-of-the-author'
2. As a social category
3. As a status or role

What's in a name? It might be thought that the name of an author is merely a superficial phenomenon. On the contrary, the name of an author may circulate and function and exert important social effects quite independently of the individual who is the bearer of that name, or, as we shall see, even if there is actually no one of that name!

The sociological implications of the author's name derive from the fact that its function is not limited to simply naming. In other words, a famous authorial name, say Agatha Christie, is more than a convenient linguistic device for referring to the person who bears that name. Nor is it merely a shorthand for a range of descriptions of that person. Agatha Christie, for instance, is something more than a convenient way of referring to the English author of a large number of detective stories, who disappeared in mysterious circumstances, etc. etc. But what is that something more?

The key social function of the author's name is to be a means of classifying texts into particular sets. To designate a text as 'an Agatha Christie novel' is to convey that it belongs to a particular type of literature, viz. popular detective fiction. But to say this is simultaneously to indicate how the text should be treated. To describe *Ten Little Niggers* as 'an Agatha Christie' is more likely to recommend it to a friend in search of light reading for a train journey than to a postgraduate student in English literature in search of a PhD dissertation topic. Thus, in this example, the name 'Agatha Christie' serves as a means of classifying certain texts as 'light' as opposed to 'serious' reading. In section 4, we will encounter the example of how the name 'Homer' functioned in literary tradition, both in medieval poetry and in writing about poetry, regardless of the fact that Homer never wrote the poems attributed to him; and that medieval poets had rarely read him.

SAQ 4

To see whether you have grasped this idea of the classificatory function of authorial names, consider the following questions:

Does the name of the author always function as the main way of sorting texts into classes and identifying them for their readers? For example, can you think of any popular novels which are not classified by reference to their author? What serves instead of the author's name?

2.3.3 Authorship as a social category and status

To some extent, the classificatory function of the author's name stems from the fact that it refers not to an individual but to a reputation (as when we say x has a (good) name for writing exciting fiction). Consequently to consider the social function or role of the author's name entails that we treat the term 'author' not as referring to an individual who 'writes' but as a social category which is applied to some individuals who write but not others.

As we have noted, not everyone who 'writes' is classified as an author: letters, contracts and posters are not usually attributed to authors. Our banknotes are signed, but not by an author. Think of all the 'writing' involved in secretarial work. In the age of word processors, business letters can be 'composed' at the push of a few buttons which assemble sentences or whole paragraphs stored in the word processor's mechanical memory. People responsible for administrative paperwork do not attract the status, or as Becker called it, the 'honorific title' of author. Such writing does not possess the unity that is expected of a work attributable to an author.

Less obviously, there can be works of literature - poems - which have undeniable literary merit but do not have an author, such as the epic poems attributed (misleadingly as we shall see in section 4 below) to Homer.

It is important to keep in mind our earlier point that 'authorship' is not a single entity and is irreducible to a single role: we need to be alert to all the different ways in which the category 'author' is used. In this perspective, the expressive image of the author - hailing the author of a book as an original artist, praising the author's omniscient knowledge of human nature - is one way, albeit a very pervasive one, of deploying the term 'author'. The legal status of authorship may not entail any attribution of creativity. The use of literary authors' names as signatories at the top of, say, petitions aiming to secure the release of political prisoners, whilst clearly related to their status as authors and thereby to the expressive image, is different from the use of their names to sell their work or other comparably original or serious works of literature. The author's name here functions as an index of a moral status in the community which novelists might share with eminent scientists or clergymen.

To speak of the author's creative powers is not to explain why his work is so good. Rather it is to adopt a definite procedure for classifying, making sense of and publicising a literary work as a work of literature (rather than science, cheap fiction or whatever). It is to accord a certain status to an individual and thereby to the author's works.

At this point, an example of how an image of expressive authorship is constructed will be useful. It involves the way publicity surrounding the film *Gallipoli* endowed the director, Peter Weir, with the aura of an artist possessed of a distinctive moral authority and aesthetic sensibility. The Weir example is particularly helpful for bringing out the socially constructed character of authorship. *Gallipoli* was a big-budget film, financed by businessmen Rupert Murdoch and Robert Stigwood and intended to reach the large popular audience of a commercial film. With a few notable exceptions, such as Alfred Hitchcock and John Ford, the names of directors have functioned until recently as a means of classifying films as 'art' movies. Popular cinema on the whole publicises films by reference to their star actors. Although this situation has begun to change, it is still unusual for popular audiences to view a film director as the key to films. Such a status has to be specifically constructed. Before an audience can be assembled which will look at *Gallipoli* as a Peter Weir film rather than a Mel Gibson (one of the stars of *Gallipoli*) film, a specific publicity operation has to be performed to establish an image of Peter Weir as an expressive 'author'.

How was this done? We will confine our remarks to one frequently noted characteristic of this film: that it is built to a large extent around the 'mateship' which develops between the two heroes of the film prior to and during the fatal beachhead established by Australian forces at Gallipoli Cove in World War I. A critical account was given of how Peter Weir decided to centre the film around two individuals and their relationship. The publicity worked to promote Weir to the status of artist or author, in part by the circulation in interviews of an anecdote about the moment on a beach at Gallipoli when the idea for building the film around the lives of the two young Australian friends inexplicably came to Weir as he gazed at an empty bottle of Eno's Fruit Salts; suddenly, as is conventionally believed of artists, Weir knew the form the film had to have. We are not suggesting that such an incident did not happen: our interest lies simply in the fact that such an incident is recounted in this context. In the same way, in countless such interviews, artistic celebrities talk about experiences which to you or me would be trivial but which, for that reason, can represent the mysterious and unpredictable origin of art in the unconventional perception of an expressive artist.

We are now in a position to tackle the first of the two main historical variations in the social role and status of authorship. Let us conclude this section by simply enumerating the main guidelines which it has generated:

1. Treat the author's 'works' not as 'creations' but as social artefacts, and the author as a maker of books. Take as starting points for enquiry the products of authorship - notably books - and the process of authorial composition (how is a poem made?).

2. Treat the term 'author' not as referring to specific individuals possessing a particularly creative type of consciousness, awareness or world-view, but as a name, a social status, or a social category within a system of classification (e.g. serious and 'light' authors, authors versus others who write for a living without being accorded the title 'author', i.e., clerks and secretaries). From the standpoint of the products of authorship, where not only authors but publishers, illustrators and book reviewers share the responsibility for their publication, the category 'author' can also be seen as a part - albeit a privileged part - of a division of labour (as in Becker's distinction between artists and support-personnel). The role of author is ascribed to some people who write or paint only under certain conditions or to some types of writing or painting rather than others.

3. Treat the expressive image of the author not as a total myth or error (even though some of its components may involve myth or error), which therefore by implication 'ought' to be replaced by a more enlightened or truer image. Rather, concentrate on understanding the various ways in which authorial names and statuses function within and between the different social activities, institutions and roles in which the category 'author' figures (the world of law, the letter-columns of newspapers, publishing and reviewing, no less than the private space of the writer's study). The operative word here is the variety of these authorial functions. This variety escapes notice if we buy into the expressive image of authorship. For, as we have seen, to define authorship in terms of a single set of ideal attributes (viz. the originality, independence, etc. appropriate to a 'great' author) is to miss important but less [illegible]fying aspects of authorship - such as its legal aspects - which are common to greater and lesser authors alike. The expressive image is indifferent to

> the social and historical factors which make possible individuality, independence of mind, and other attributes associated with modern authorship.

So, armed with these methodological guidelines, the course will now embark on its sociological-cum-historical investigation of authorship. We begin with a look at variations in the products of authorship, and then go on to look at the processes of authorial composition.

3 AUTHORSHIP AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BOOK BY PRINTING

3.1 Writing and copying

The methodological arguments advanced in the previous section might have seemed somewhat abstract, even though they call for specific historical and sociological distinctions to be drawn between different categories of authorship.

We shall illustrate these distinctions by contrasting medieval and modern authorship from the standpoint of their products. This will involve an investigation of the differences between the material appearance of books before and after the invention of movable type in Europe around the middle of the fifteenth century. These differences were recognised by the great Renaissance scholar, Francis Bacon, who spoke of the printing press as one of the three great modern inventions 'which have changed the appearance and state of the whole world'. Our concern will be with a series of differences in the form of the book before and after the shift from manuscript books to typescript, particularly as they bear on authorship and involve:

(a) an individualisation of the figure of the author and a higher estimation of originality

(b) a promotion of the expectation that authorship will entail a certain critical independence of mind.

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Read Hirst and Woolley, pp.31-43, quickly, without taking notes or pausing over difficulties. The point is to provide yourself with a rough overall impression of the ground we are going to cover in this section of the course.

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The contrast between medieval and modern forms of book-making turns on the changing status accorded to copying. The slow but relentless labour of the copyist, who reproduced in elaborate script the text of already existing handwritten material, was recognised as a most valued activity in the Middle Ages. Today, as Hirst and Woolley (p.40) point out, the copying of books (or of records, broadcasts and films) is no longer a respected activity undertaken for the public good, having been reclassified in the quite different economic and social conditions of modern times as an illicit or even criminal activity, liable to be termed plagiarism or piracy.

These terms indicate something of what lies behind the elevated status accorded to the 'creativity' of the modern author, whose authorship might be defined precisely as a form of writing that is neither plagiarism (the copying of other people's words and ideas), nor piracy (the publication of illegally copied editions of a work, which deprive authors of their due economic benefits, or royalties).

The negative view of copying finds an institutional support in current laws of copyright. (You might have noticed the copyright statement at the beginning of this study guide, and on the excerpts attached as readings.) Copyright law is clearly related to the concept of authorship; but we should note that it varies from country to country in the extent to which it protects the literary property of authors (which variation provides evidence for Foucault's differentiated model of authorship).

You will also observe how the existence of 'property in the word' (to use Hirst and Woolley's phrase, p.40) is nowadays taken for granted. However, the status of the book as personal property and the uses that can legally be made of its contents, including their copying, are complex legal issues. It is too simple to assume that a book, taken as a piece of property, is always and only attributable to an author. In other words, the attribution of the status of author to the one who 'writes' a book is neither obvious nor necessary in all circumstances; this becomes clear when we consider the sort of activity involved in medieval bookmaking.

From Antiquity to the twelfth century, a virtual monopoly of book production in the West rested with the Christian monasteries. The valuable social service of preserving knowledge was performed by monks copying old manuscripts in a purpose-built writing room called a *scriptorium*. David Diringer provides a fascinating glimpse of life in a monastic scriptorium: the elaborate writing paraphernalia, the rules of conduct, and the air of religious devotion associated with the painstaking activity of the scribal copyists. Recent research offers a less idealised account of medieval copying, but this does not significantly alter our sense of Diringer's account of activities that represented the ideals of medieval writing. In relation to these ideals, you might consider the skill and painstaking effort required of a copyist in order to reproduce a text accurately (cf. Hirst and Woolley, p.38). The prestige of the copyist is further enhanced in the light of the social value of an activity given over to the preservation and publication of an all too easily lost stock of traditional knowledge, a value that explains why the figure of scribal copyist became an ideal (a model) of Christian virtue.

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Read David Diringer, *The Hand-Produced Book* (excerpts), reading 3. This gives an account of the physical appearance of the medieval book and the practice of writing in a medieval scriptorium: the instrumentation, the rules, the religious aura.

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SAQ 5

How does Diringer account for the dignity and prestige of copying - why the copyist was idealised - in medieval scribal culture?

The dignity of copying in the Middle Ages is apparent in medieval theologian Saint Bonaventura's classification of 'makers of books' cited in Hirst and Woolley, pp.40-41. Our commonsense distinction between an author and a scribe (one who merely copies) might be unintelligible to a medieval public. Descriptions of the work of the medieval scribe indicate that only with the advent of print did the distinction between writing and copying sharpen to the point of relegating one who copies to lower status. In the age before print, this distinction between author and copyist could not be made. As we have seen, it was the copyist, not the author, who in the earlier period provided the ideal image of 'the writer'. In a word, with printing comes the increasingly value-laden distinction between writing and copying, which is so crucial to the emergence of the modern concept of authorship.

Saint Bonaventura's classification of those who made books suggests that the activity of the copyist is more appropriately compared to the work of a compiler (compilator) or commentator than to that of an author in the modern sense. As Hirst and Woolley point out (p.41), Bonaventura's classification is remarkable for its lack of symmetry. We can grasp this if we set it out in tabular form (see table overleaf).

Logically, Bonaventura's scheme should allow for the possibility of a 'maker of books' writing his own work entirely. Yet it did not occur to him even to note the absence of a category (the diametrical opposite of a 'scribe') corresponding to this possibility. For Bonaventura, the idea of someone originating entirely new work is absent. In the expressive or Romantic scheme of things, it becomes the ideal image of authorship.

			Adds new materials	
	Writes others' work (adds nothing)	Adds others' material	(a) in second place	(b) in principal place
SCRIBE	X	-	-	-
COMPILER	X	X	-	-
COMMENTATOR	X	X	X	-
AUTHOR	X	X	-	X
---	-	-	-	X (Place of Romantic image of author)

SAQ 6

In what way is Becker's hierarchical distinction between artist (substitute 'author') and support personnel inappropriate for understanding the 'division of labour' involved in medieval 'bookmaking'?

3.2 Medieval bookmaking

In the previous section, a rather simple distinction was drawn between writing and copying. It is now important to look more deeply into the practices of medieval makers of books. We shall find that, before print, the author was not a central figure. In other words, where the concept of 'authorship' is concerned, modern assumptions are radically different from those of medieval times. Then, texts existed in the form of handwritten scripts (manuscripts); few could read, and then only with difficulty; and literary reading and writing were permeated by elements of pre-literate 'oral' culture. In such circumstances, it is important to recognise the particular medieval meanings of terms such as 'book', 'writing', 'copying' and 'authorship'.

On the whole, we now attribute to authors the primary responsibility of being the maker of a book, as is apparent from a glance at any title page. If we speak here of 'makers' rather than 'authors' of books, this reflects the fact that in the medieval context 'authors' were not accorded the superiority that they receive today over other categories of people responsible for the production and circulation of books. Some of the attributes particular to the medieval 'author' can be brought out by comparing medieval and modern books. A modern book is normally

- accessible. New editions can be turned out if it sells well; libraries will stock it, or a friend could lend it to you; today's exorbitant prices notwithstanding, you don't have to be a prince or a millionaire to buy it;

- unified in respect of its subject-matter, style, argument. This unity derives from consideration of the work as an expression of the mind or experience of an author;

- readable in a relatively short space of time. Readily scanned by a student to see if it is worth reading in detail or by a bookseller or librarian, the modern book can be quickly compared with other works to see if it contains anything new.

In each of these respects the medieval book may be contrasted with its modern counterpart. Firstly, it tended to be inaccessible. Diringer (reading 3) describes the great service-books, from which the priest read aloud in church, as 'part of the furniture, almost of the fixtures', chained up and too bulky to be moved other than infrequently. The multi-volumed, metal-bound directories in metropolitan telephone booths or the multi-volume sets of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* provide appropriate modern physical analogies to the medieval book.

Once you have envisaged these enormous objects which could not be passed around from hand to hand, you can begin to see why the argument for the value of copying was tied in part to the fact of the inaccessibility of the medieval book. The absence of notions of plagiarism, piracy and theft of intellectual property in the Middle Ages does not reflect a more lax or lenient attitude towards such (modern) crimes as these; rather it belongs to the economic circumstance in which books were neither accessible nor readily moved.

The form of the medieval book contrasts in other respects with aspects of the modern book that we now simply take for granted. Pick a modern book off the shelf and turn to the title page. Unlike the pages which follow it, the title page stands out as a clean white sheet of paper entirely given over to the display of the book's title and the author's name. But if you were to open up any early book, including the first printed book, the first thing to strike you would be the absence of a title page. Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin in reading 4 describe how a medieval manuscript text would begin on the top side of the first right-hand (or *recto*) page following a few words at the top of the page recounting its subject matter. Title, author, printer, date and place of publication were reserved for the colophon at the end of the book. (In a few modern books of superior production, the colophon has been retained to give information on such technicalities of production as typeface, paper and binding.) Febvre and Martin go on to the question of how and why title pages came into being. The thing to notice is how little these pages originally had to do with advertising the name of the author. Only subsequently did they become the obvious means of doing so.

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Read Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book* (excerpts), reading 4, pp.2-3. Then answer the following question.

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SAQ 7

How did title pages originate? What did they consist of, and what was the point of them if it wasn't to draw attention to the author?

The title page represents a single component of a book. However, if we consider the book as a whole, stark differences emerge between what counted as a book in the Middle Ages and what we would now recognise as one. This can be demonstrated by reference to what might be called the unity of the book as an object. (You will recall from section 2.3.3 that books attributable to authors are thought of as having a particular unity.) But to judge from Febvre and Martin's discussion of the medieval institution of the *pecia*, we must suspect that unity was not an attribute of the medieval book. The pecia was one of the systems adopted for manual copying of existing works of scholarship after the twelfth century when the universities succeeded the monasteries as centres of Christian learning. A 'stationer', licensed by the university, parcelled out sections ('quires' or peciae) of the original manuscript 'book' to professional copyists or lent it to students to copy. The very possibility of farming out manuscripts for reproduction in the pecia form is instructive. You will remember how Diringer (reading 3) argued that the typical medieval book took the form of a manuscript. This characterisation still carries the suggestion that a medieval book is the work of a single hand, and thus fails to bring out the extraordinarily diverse character of the medieval manuscript by comparison with the modern book. The pecia system confirms that the modern equation of 'author' and 'writer' only becomes possible when print makes the activity of manual copying redundant, and that the medieval book was an assemblage of manuscripts (often of highly varied content) collected together in a medieval equivalent of a loose-leaf folder.

Perhaps the most useful term to describe the loose-leaf character of the medieval book is the *compendium*, in which diverse elements are combined. Hirst and Woolley mention two other forms of the medieval compendium, the Book of Hours and the philosophical *summa*. A Book of Hours was a devotional compendium, constructed in conformity with monastic divisions of the day and night into periods designated for particular sorts of worship or contemplation. At a certain hour, one would contemplate a saintly martyr's life-history or, at another, a passage from the Gospels on temptations of the flesh. A summa, on the other hand, comprised a collection of theological-philosophical arguments on items of Christian dogma.

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Read Febvre and Martin, reading 4, pp.1-2, and Hirst and Woolley, pp.36-37.

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SAQ 8

1. (a) Underline three passages where Hirst and Woolley set out the above-mentioned characterisation of the typical form of the medieval book.

   (b) Why was the pecia system of copying appropriate to this form?

2. Why would the attribution of authorship to a compendium book be of limited importance?

The inclusion within the same cover of work copied by scribes and drawn from different contexts raises problems for our modern practice of assigning the whole of a book to a single author. Consideration of the medieval compendium and its heterogeneous form suggests how much modern practice is tied to a notion of the book as a unity.

It is not therefore simply a case of noting, with Diringer, that the 'handwritten parchment or vellum codex is "the book" par excellence of the Middle Ages'. The contrast is not simply between what is written by hand and what is printed by machine. It is also between a set of components having no unity, no single point of origin in the mind of a single author; and the unified modern book can be considered precisely in terms of such a single origin - this gives a basic unity to contents and subject matter and distinguishes one book from others.

3.3 Medieval reading

Before we consider the social impact of printing and its consequences for the concept of authorship, it is worthwhile turning our attention to a figure who has been notably neglected in the course thus far. We have discussed the author and the book but nothing substantial has been said of the reader, particularly the reader of the medieval book of manuscripts whose form we have just described.

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Read Henry Chaytor, *From Script to Print* (excerpts), reading 5, and Hirst and Woolley, p.38.

****

Prior to printing, what did reading involve? Medieval reading was conditioned by a totally different experience of language from ours. Language, in a mostly 'oral' culture, was something one heard spoken. As Chaytor and Hirst and Woolley explain, prior to the establishment of the printed work the 'image' of language was predominantly an acoustic image. People could not visualise how a word would look when written, as we can. Rather, medieval readers could imagine how a word sounded when spoken. To read meant to read aloud, without the aid of 'presentational devices' such as punctuation marks, paragraphs or page numbers. The reader followed the lines of the manuscript (see illustrations following this page) marking his place with his finger as best he could, and distinguishing by their sound individual words or clauses in the line of letters. This made for extremely slow reading (the loan period for books from a typical monastic library was of the order of twelve months!). The reader either murmured the words to himself as shown in the report on medieval reading cited by Chaytor or else recited them to others as he read. In relation to the latter option, it is noteworthy that manuscripts of works such as the *Canterbury Tales*, composed and copied in the last years of the 1300s, carry traces of being written for reading aloud to an audience.

To acquire knowledge through reading was thus a far more laborious business than it is today. Consider how much harder it would be to read this study guide if it was written without breaks indicating separate words and sentences, and without paragraphs, sections or chapters, let alone the carefully organised typographic layout with which you are now familiar in these courses.

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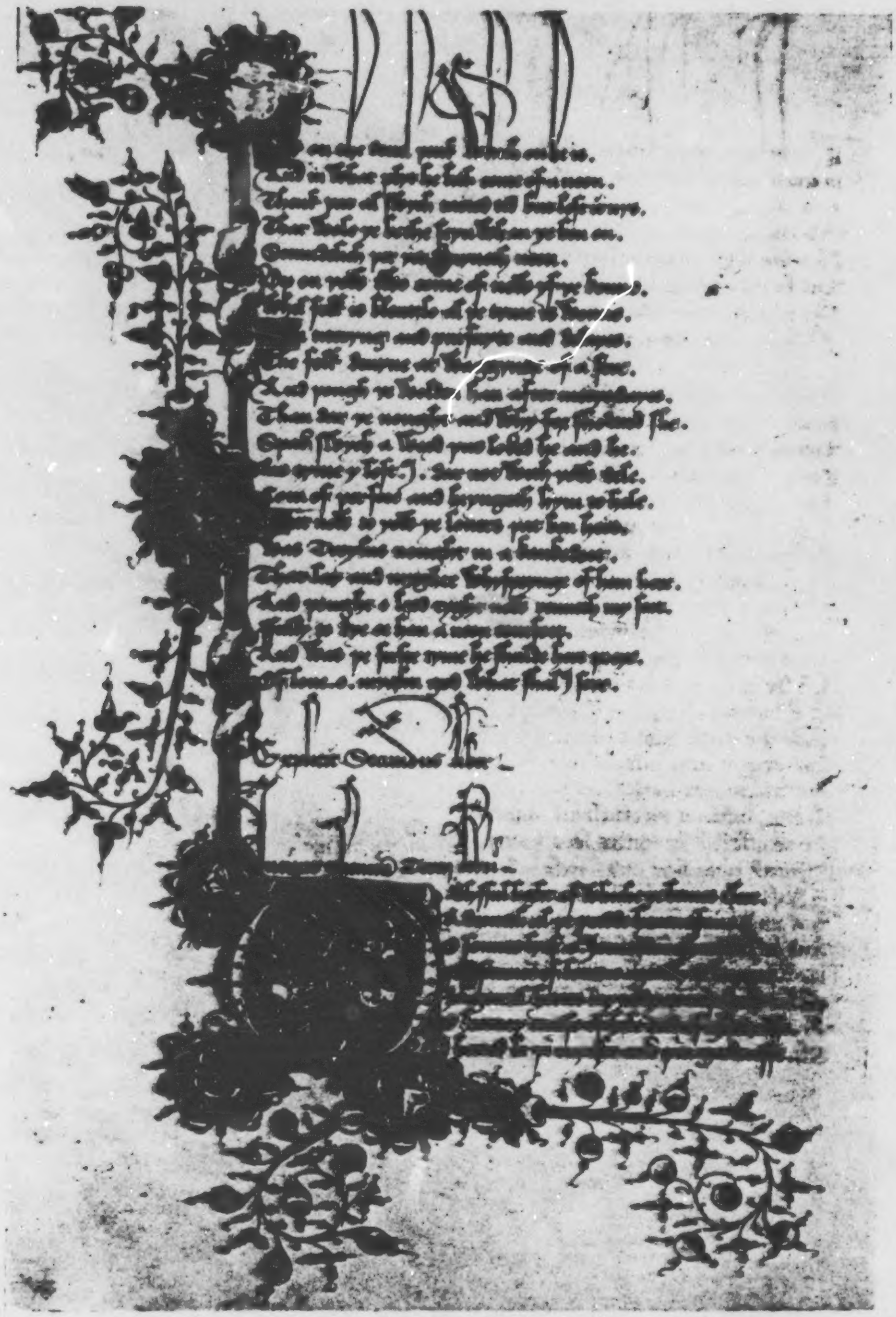

V-27. Copy of Chaucer, *M. 817*: *Troilus and Criseyde*, ii. 1737–iii. 7; floral ornamentation.

Source: DIRINGER, D. *The Illuminated Book: Its History and Production.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), plate V-27.

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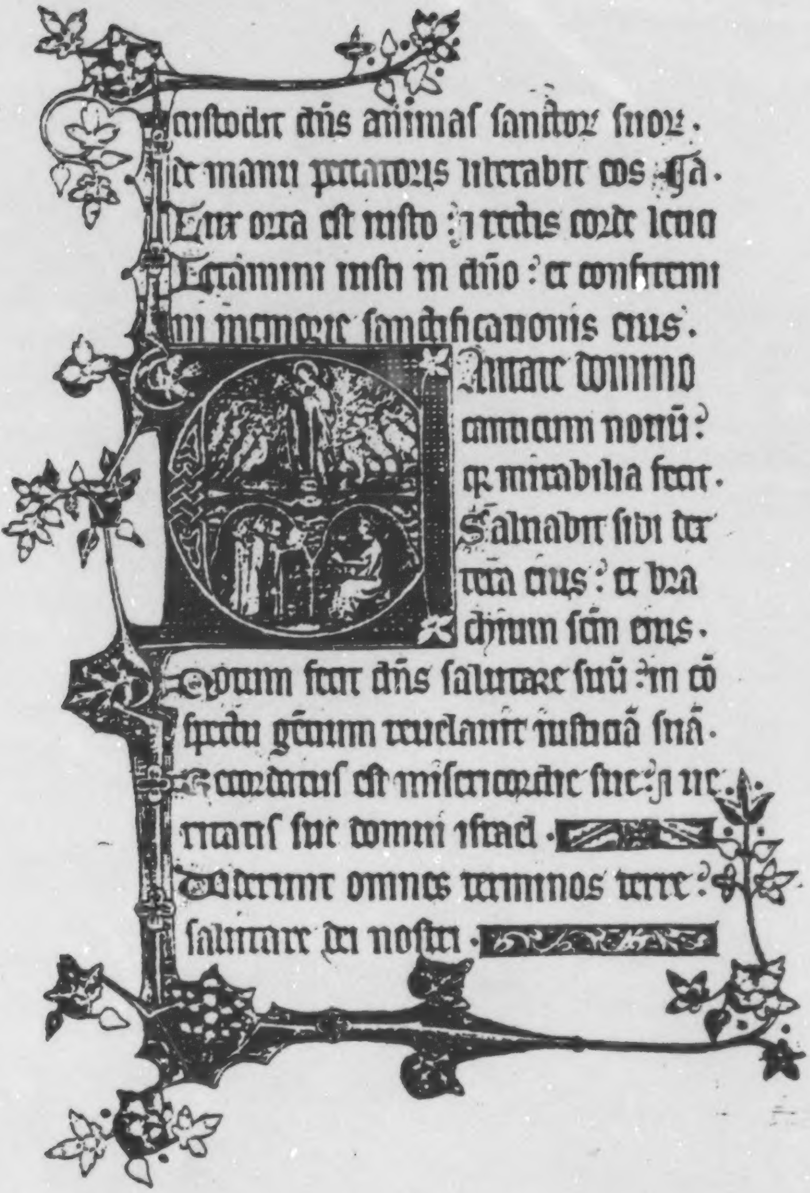

V–21. *Bromholm Psalter (Ashmole MS. 1523).*

Source: DIRINGER, D. *The Illuminated Book: Its History and Production.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), plate V-21.

The form of the medieval book thus militated against anything like the capacity of the modern reader to read quickly and silently, to scan the page, to be able at a glance to identify paragraphs and chapters that can be omitted or to skip over long descriptive passages. By contrast, the slow labour of the medieval reader led him to read everything, and not only to read it but to commit it to memory in exactly the form and the terms in which the text was written. Perhaps the best modern equivalent is the careful reading of a poem to be learned by rote for recitation, precisely in the words of the original, without paraphrasing, summarising or omitting anything. These changes in reading are partly what allows the modern reader to adopt (except where something like the rote learning of a poem is concerned) a critical and independent attitude towards the text, to pick and choose from it, to look for hidden arguments or assumptions or even contradictions.

This distinction between medieval and modern reading, together with the fact that the ready accessibility of modern books facilitates our return to a previously consulted work in order to check the accuracy of the interpretation or quotation of another work, allows us to make a rather important point that will be developed at the end of this section. The 'critical independence' that we have identified as a key attribute of modern authorship is also an attribute of modern readership, related very much to the practical conditions, techniques and operations of modern reading.

In drawing together forms of writing and of reading, one thing being said is that authors are not authors all on their own. The receivers of books, the readers and their reading habits, are also part of the total process of 'making' a book. The modern audience could not be what it is without the print revolution and its effects, including the changes in reading habits that printing brought about. Having described some of these changes, we can show how the modern notion of the author as a critically independent individual is inseparable from the establishment of conditions in which readers progressively acquired - in part through transformations that changed the medieval book into its modern counterpart - an analogous critical independence.

3.4 From script to printing

The shift from script to printing can be viewed as a move from one to another set of conventions for the social construction of knowledge. This means that the modern image of the author as an ideally independent critical consciousness operating outside the bounds of convention must be qualified. The emergence of the creative individual author does not signify an escape from social and intellectual conventions and restrictive forms of medieval reading and writing: it marks a move from one set of such conventions and forms to another. Likewise, the modern reader's capacity to look for contradictions or to check one account against another to confirm coherence and reliability depends on the establishment and assimilation of new conventions or procedures of reading, not the escape from all conventions.

Elizabeth Eisenstein's *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (reading 6) concerns the social and intellectual consequences of the 'communications revolution' (her phrase) inaugurated approximately five centuries ago by the printer Gutenberg when he invented movable type. The establishment of printing presses in the Rhineland urban centres during the 1460s set off chains of effects which have been pursued in Eisenstein's monumental two-volume book. As she makes clear, the influence of print is not restricted to a revolution in the presentation of the written word (from manuscript to typescript); it also includes the commercial consequences of improvements in the art of mapmaking which the shift from script to print made possible, and partial responsibility for the success of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation by enabling 'mass reproduction' of religious imagery (Hirst and Woolley, p.39). Marshall McLuhan may exaggerate the effects of print (as Hirst and Woolley point out, pp.42-43) but the title of his major work on the subject, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, is no exaggeration. The print revolution may not be the single most fundamental change associated with the coming into being of 'the modern age', yet few important spheres of social life have remained untouched by it.

Our concern is primarily with the impact of print on literature and in particular on the status of the author. An adequate understanding of these matters depends on relating them to developments in neighbouring areas, such as commerce, law and technology. We shall be especially interested in ways of demonstrating that the social effects of the print revolution are not merely external to the profession of authorship, but help to pattern authorial activity itself.

It is important to recognise that there is no single historical cut-off point which separates the culture of script and oral language from the culture of print. However, we can discern a number of changes which, although separated in time, add up to the 'revolution' studied by Eisenstein. It is against the backdrop of this great historical shift that we are developing our investigation of authorship.

In surveying the main influences of the print revolution, Eisenstein is alert to the dangers of overstating or oversimplifying the effects of this technological development. She prefers to think of the effects of print in terms of how particular facets of the printing revolution created new fields of possibilities rather than a single set of necessary developments. She thus distinguishes several types of effects of printing.

Reading 6 covers four types of effect relevant to our main topic, the role of print in individualising the figure of the author and in fostering an attitude of critical independence on the part of authors. These are:

1. Effects of dissemination (R6:1-3)

2. Effects of standardisation (R6:3-4)

3. Effects of presentation (R6:4-5)

4. Effects of amplification and reinforcement (R6:5-7).

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Read Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (excerpts), reading 6, and also Hirst and Woolley, pp.39-42.

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SAQ 9

Write three or four sentences on each of the following questions.

1. Which important effects of the dissemination of written material would fall out of sight if historians studying the topic were to confine their attention solely to the effects of the vast increase in numbers of copies of a work generated by printing?

2. What does 'standardisation' consist of? Relate your answer to the scholarly notion of the 'standard edition' of an author's work.

3. Why, according to Eisenstein, did the gross typographical errors in the early days of print (give an example) not detract from the standardising impact of print?

4. Which social developments contemporary with the advent of print gave added impetus to the 'standardising' effects it tended to have on spoken and written language?

5. Outline one way in which standardising effects contributed to the development of the 'expressive' concept of authorship.

(cont'd over page)

(SAQ 9 continued)

6. What is the connection between the preservability of a fixed text ('typographical fixity') and the emergence of a consciousness of ownership concerning whoever originally wrote or invented a given piece of work or a machine?

7. How did the new forms of authorship and literary property rights made possible by typographical fixity 'undermine older concepts of collective authority'? Illustrate by reference to the querying of Biblical 'authors' by eighteenth-century freethinkers.

8. What does Eisenstein mean by 'amplification' and 'reinforcement'?

Each of these issues could receive extended development, but we shall limit ourselves to a consideration of printing as a technology which fixes and secures knowledge, and thereby helps to bring about a thoroughgoing change of attitude towards whatever is already known, transforming the notion of author in the process. Prior to typographical standardisation and the widespread dissemination and preservation of texts, the most important problem of knowledge was essentially how to hang on to it. The primary purpose of reading and writing was to recover, memorise and thus retain the stock of traditional knowledge. However, although importance was attached to adapting or interpreting existing knowledge in accordance with contemporary needs and new knowledge was not unappreciated, Eisenstein points out that:

> different meanings may have been assigned terms such as ... discovery and recovery ... before important departures from precedent could be permanently recorded... It must have been difficult to distinguish discovering something new from recovering it in the age of scribes ... for superior techniques and systems of knowledge were frequently discovered by being recovered. (R6:5)

With print, however, came the emphasis on individual authorship, on innovation and originality. This was partly a result of what has been called the epistemological security (or security of knowledge) which print made possible. The medieval problem of retrieving and preserving knowledge gives way to a preoccupation with evaluating and comparing statements in different written works with a view to displacing the knowledge that fails to come up to scratch. Typography altered the social organisation of knowledge in a number of ways which make this modern critical attitude to existing knowledge possible:

- The simultaneous availability of copies of the same text to a wide range of institutions and scholars permits a greater exchange of views between scholars who have read the same work at the same time.

- The possibility of accumulating a variety of texts on the same topic permits greater cross-referencing and comparison. Habits of reading associated with print reinforce this possibility by dint of the capacity of a reader to scan texts for discrepancies, contradictions and inaccuracies.

- The advent of the fixed text or 'standard edition' sharpens the distinction between non-original and original work. It enables more exact comparisons which set off the new from the old, the superior from the inferior. It also makes possible the establishment of literary property. Concern to evaluate knowledge critically is related to a concern about the identity of those responsible for producing new knowledge.

- There is recognition of the ready retrievability of knowledge in circumstances where it can be collated and preserved, as in the great European eighteenth-century encyclopaedias; these volumes made it possible to find out something by looking it up in a book, chart or table and diminished the value of memorised knowledge and, with it, eloquent speaking. Once fixed in printed form, knowledge could survive without a need for endless oral repetition.

In short, the fixative and preserving effects of print produced an epistemological security and a new set of material conditions in which one statement could be compared securely with others, the comparison being reliably based on the observable identity of the statements in question. The new conditions of print undermined the two pre-print forms of securing a continuity of knowledge: memorisation and copying. The reliability of copying is evidently of a much higher order where print is concerned than it ever was in medieval times, even with the most assiduous of copyists.

3.5 The emergence of the expressive image of authorship

As long as copying remained socially honourable work, there was little room for the profession of author in its modern sense. However, the possibility arose of earning an independent living through the royalties earned from the sale of a book (at least where the author's ownership of the book is protected by copyright). This possibility, as Febvre and Martin put it elsewhere in their study, was 'bound to the press and born because of it'. After all, how could any author be paid for a text whose form could not be fixed?

But the arrival of the printing press did not immediately displace long-standing medieval notions on the production of texts. In this regard, it is important to note that for a long time after printing began the bulk of published printed matter consisted of ancient texts and of anonymous 'manual-like' material such as catechisms, devotional literature and calendars. Eisenstein shows (R6:2-3) how printing did not automatically promote the 'finer things of life'; writings on scientific matters, for instance, lagged behind the production of literature books that had a practical purpose, whether this was pleasure or devotion to the church.

We are not suggesting that there was no such thing as the print revolution. But as Eisenstein says, a mutation is not the same as an amputation. The revolution was slow and uneven, not a single and immediate transformation of all aspects of writing at the end of the medieval period. It was less a single event than a whole series of interrelated shifts. Scholars have noted the curious fact of huge quantities of manuscripts surviving from the fifteenth century which are handwritten copies of early *printed* texts. The profession of copyist by no means became redundant with the appearance of printed matter. Thus banned books continued to be copied by hand.

Let us conclude this section by considering some further points on the emergence of the expressive image of the author. For all its familiarity, it by no means fits harmoniously with all aspects of current literary production. Where questions of legal ownership and attribution are concerned, the expressive image is simply one element of authorship among others that might be recognised. Copyright, for example, did not originate in a concern to guarantee the ownership rights of individual authors over words, ideas or inventions. Even today, when copyright law is more clearly bound up with questions of originality and authorial property, this law does not entirely hold to the sense of 'original work' implicit in the expressive image of the individual author. This deviation from the expressive image of authorship is vividly illustrated in R.F. Whale's authoritative study, *Copyright*, which brings out the fact that English copyright law permits *corporate* bodies such as film companies, television studios and universities to fall within the terms of what the law will call an author. And, as Paul Hirst has pointed out elsewhere, this legal definition of non-individual authorship stands in distinction to the individualistic stress on authorial originality in the bulk of contemporary literary criticism and literary biography.

Furthermore, 'original work' is defined by the law so as to permit any publication (from a novel or poem to an information bulletin such as an electronic circuit diagram) to fall under the protection of copyright. In other words, the law is indifferent to whether an original work has any artistic or moral content, and to whether or not 'originality' results from creative activity *by an individual*. According to Whale, a football programme may be 'original' in the sense recognised by copyright law, and the author or copyright holder in this case would be the club which issued the programme, presumably with minimal concern for the sort of artistic and moral issues that are particular to modern forms of literary production. It should be made clear, however, that some legal systems differ from British law in that they incorporate a specific principle of artistic creativity into copyright law, thus making the notion (unfamiliar to us) of 'author-right' the central category protected by the law. This is yet another example of how the expressive image of authorship may not be uniformly established in all the contexts in which issues of authorship occur in contemporary society.

By exploring the social, commercial and legal relations within which authorship operates, our investigations begin to show something more of its many-sided character than is revealed by focussing solely on the notions of individual personality and creativity that underpin the expressive image of the author.

Whilst it is apparent that printing made possible new forms of individualisation of authors as well as new property relations for written materials, the effects of printing are not confined to the generation of the Romantic or expressive image. Several types of 'personal' connection between author and work established in consequence of the print revolution bear little resemblance to the relationship of self-expression suggested by the Romantic image of the author.

This point is underlined in Eisenstein's discussion of the emerging figure of the individual author. Literary (i.e., self-expressive) authors were only one of several types of writer, including the new category of the eponymous writer, whose name becomes famous because a work or product is named after him or because his name is used as a sort of 'publicity apparatus' (Eisenstein, R6:9).

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Re-read Elizabeth Eisenstein's discussion of the eponymous writer, reading 6, pp.8-10.

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SAQ 10

Eisenstein demonstrates the growing prestige of individual scientific and technical inventors in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Europe. Briefly suggest what she shows about the role of authors in this context.

Some other points can be made about relations between different concepts of authorship and the ownership of works:

- Following Eisenstein's suggestion (P.6:9), it may now be possible to treat the expressive author's personality itself as in part the product of a kind of publicity apparatus involving such elements as interviews with the author to discover his or her inner feelings and beliefs, biographical and autobiographical descriptions, personal anecdotes, etc.

- The modern concept of authorial personality might then be seen in relation to a pre-existing commercial apparatus that individualised authors by means of the commercial promotion needed to achieve the level of sales of their works required by the economics of the printing press. In other words, this process of commercial individualisation arose independently of the formulation of an expressive image of the individual author as a creative personality.

The expressive relation of author and work was not the only or necessary outcome, in the nineteenth century, of an inevitable chain of historical events following from the print revolution; it was instead one among many facets of the changing nature of authorship from medieval to modern times.

TUTORIAL ONE

The agenda for discussion is taken from sections 1 to 3 of the study guide and the accompanying readings. Whilst you are encouraged to bring questions and problems of your own to the tutorial, discussion of the following items of common interest is anticipated:

1. Clarification of the several elements that make up the 'expressive' image of the author as outlined in the study guide. You should list these elements (there are at least five) and read through Orwell's essay 'Why I write' (reading 1) in order to recognise their presence there. Discussion in the tutorial will also canvass evidence of this image from other sources. This will help you prepare for the first part of the assessment item.

2. Clarification of Becker's account of artistic production and of the differences between Becker's approach to authorship and that of this course. What is the nature of the course's sociological interest in authorship and literary composition? (e.g. How might it differ from the standpoint of a literary critic?)

3. The status of authorship, given the 'compendious' form of medieval books and the nature of bookmaking before print. You should give particular attention to SAQs 5, 6 and the second question of SAQ 8.

   An important part of the exercise is to apply the methodological arguments of section 2 concerning how authorship is to be analysed in this medieval historical instance. Having done this, what lessons can be learned from the contrast between modern expressive views of the author and medieval views?

4. Printing and authorship.

   (a) The impact of reading habits on the form of authorship and composition. Chaytor (reading 5) is central to this topic.

   (b) Questions arising from your work on SAQs 9 and 10 and from the long summary on the contribution of print to the emergence of the expressive image of the author (section 3.5).

If you cannot or do not wish to attend this first tutorial, you should take particular care about completing the SAQs in section 3.

4 AUTHORSHIP AND TECHNIQUES OF COMPOSITION

Our study of historical shifts in the meaning and function of the term author now continues from a different angle, moving from the products to the processes of composition. We turn from an examination of the different forms of the book to look at changing views of literary composition. This section falls into three parts:

1. In section 4.1 we return once more to the expressive image of the author. Thus far we have considered it, firstly, as a dominant contemporary 'myth' about literary authorship, against which certain sociological conceptions of authorship may be counterposed (section 2); secondly, as a historical phenomenon, tied in various ways to material changes in the technology of book-production over the last 500 years or so. Our concern now, as indicated above, will be to situate the expressive image more precisely within an intellectual context of changing conceptions of literary composition. This means looking at the philosophical origins of the image in the 'Romantic' literary theory of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. It was the literary, literary-critical and cultural movement known as Romanticism which was responsible for establishing the modern conception of great literature as the expression of a creative genius, who breaks with established literary conventions and techniques. Two important aspects of this Romantic revolution in conceptions of authorship and composition will be discussed:

   (a) The definition of the expressive image of the author against rhetoric, and the tradition of literary composition associated with rhetorical conventions and techniques.

   (b) The Romantic movement's championship of 'folk literature' as spontaneous and free expression.

2. In section 4.2, we consider oral epic poetry in order to illustrate how the composition of oral epic verse, far from being the spontaneous expression of a communal folk culture, appears to be a rigidly conventionalised art form whose conventions have much in common with those of the written rhetorical literature to which it was contrasted by Romantic literary theory.

3. In section 4.3, we shall examine, in its own terms, the rhetorical tradition of literary composition which dates back to Ancient Roman culture, finally declining in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries under the impetus of Romantic criticism.

   This tradition viewed writing as a teachable skill that involved the practical mastery of a set of techniques for the 'imitation' of traditional model literary themes and stylistic devices for imparting established or 'commonplace' truths. This tradition has a place for authorship, but the figure of the author associated with it is not a creative genius but a technical virtuoso, a master of 'imitation'.

4.1 Romanticism and the expressive image

Our next reading gives an account, in fairly general terms, of the various components of the Romantic conception of poetic composition. Beginning with Wordsworth's classic statement concerning the spontaneity of true poetry, Meyer Abrams elaborates the related ideals of Romantic literary theory by reference to two late essays by John Stuart Mill which give the expressive image in a particularly unqualified form.

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Read Meyer Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (excerpts), reading 7.

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SAQ 11

What are the four main propositions of Mill's expressive theory? Try to write a single sentence on each proposition.

Abrams's summary of Mill gives a serviceable account of the theoretical constituents of the expressive image as these were first articulated in Romantic literary theory. But we cannot go far in our study of this philosophical context for the image without becoming aware that it rests, to a very large extent, on a set of rejections of, and alignments with, earlier forms of literary composition - as these were understood at the time. The most important of these was the Romantic rejection of rhetorical conceptions of the author and of the process of composition. Another, more minor connection was the Romantic movement's alignment with 'primitive' literature of all kinds, particularly what it thought of as 'folk poetry'. We shall be examining each of these external connections in turn.

4.1.1 Romanticism: against rhetoric

The Romantic movement established a conception of great literature as the expression of a creative individual genius who breaks with established literary conventions and techniques; in this way, the movement itself broke with the traditional rhetorical framework for writing and literary production.

For the Romantic movement, rhetoric was a reduction of literature to a set of rules and devices for producing effects on an audience or reader. The author, likewise, was supposedly reduced to the status of a crafty and verbose entertainer, propagandist or pedagogue. This at least was the notion of rhetoric assaulted by the Romantics.

Central to their view of literary writing was what we might call a flight from conventionality. Writing in 1825, the critic, Ludovic Vitet, could thus describe the Romantics as 'a lively coalition of diverse interests, but with a common goal, warfare against the rules, the rules of convention'. To define Romanticism as anti-conventional is, of course, to speak in negative terms. The positive side of the Romantic image of authorship might be encapsulated in a famous episode in the history of English romantic poetry: the account given by the poet and essayist Coleridge of taking opium, falling asleep and dreaming the poem which, immediately upon awakening, he simply wrote straight out. The poem was 'Kubla Khan'.

Coleridge's account is exemplary for the Romantic view of literary writing. The dream epitomised the unpredictable nature of the poetic imagination. As such, it is entirely in keeping with the view expressed by Coleridge's contemporary and fellow poet, Shelley, in his 'A defence of poetry':

> A man cannot say, 'I will compose poetry'. The greatest poet even cannot say it: for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence awakens to transitory brightness... Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline. (Shelley, in Furst, comp., 1980, p.91)

Shelley's metaphorical description of 'the mind in creation' brings out two ways in which great literature in the Romantic view is fundamentally against technique:

1. Great poetry cannot be written to order; not even the greatest poets can sit down and write a poem on request or as a matter of routine. Rather, one is 'inspired' to write. It is unthinkable that either the topic or the style of a poem could be specified prior to this 'invisible influence' of the creative process going on in the poet's mind.

2. The existence of a poem is explained by reference to its creative source ('inspiration'). If inspiration lies beyond calculation, then Shelley's concluding assertion that the creative process is already on the wane from

the moment the poet puts pen to paper is not as exaggerated as it might seem. It reflects the fact that an expressive account of literature will tend to exclude the possibility of explaining what is involved in the activity of composition.

This last point has important consequences. It means that the idea of writing poetry as an activity which resembles any other activity where 'practice makes perfect' is incompatible with the expressive image of the author. If you have to practise at producing the 'right' turn of phrase, then where is the spontaneity which is the hallmark of poetic expression? Writing poetry would be a teachable craft like woodwork or macrame. And then where is the inimitable originality and individuality supposedly characteristic of an authentic poem? The expressive view of authorship can admit the existence of an element of craft and calculation in literary composition only as long as they function as an impediment to the original writer, or at best as a secondary prop for the creative imagination. Writing must be inspired or else - in this Romantic view - it is worthless.

Rhetorical writing served as the very example of the lack of inspiration. From the Romantic standpoint it was unacceptable to think that writers of poetry, faced with a blank page and the question of what to write, might turn for inspiration to a recorded body of knowledge and technical advice which could furnish them with the skills and formulations necessary for producing their writing. But this is precisely what books of rhetoric proposed, offering the writer a range of topics on which to write, suggestions on stylistic devices calculated to please an audience, exercises in poetic composition. In imitation of the treatment of the same topics by Classical poets, both masters and students wrote poetry by drawing upon 'commonplace' books containing lists of alternative ornamental expressions. Training in rhetoric provided writers with a sort of poem plan, i.e., a set order of statements in which a poem on any recognised topic should be developed.

We have indicated how the Romantics saw rhetorical technique as opposed to the individual authorial personality understood as the source of great literature. The establishment of this opposition is accompanied by two other developments:

- The figure of the 'unconventional' author became an emblem of revolt against any traditional authority, particularly where questions of knowledge are concerned.

- This 'individualisation' of literature made possible comparative judgements about the relative merits of individual authors in terms of their creativity. This ranking operation then becomes central to literary commentary, and the tradition of literature is narrowed down to a tradition of creative individual geniuses.

The following excerpt from Abrams indicates the consequences of these new tendencies in literary theory.

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Read Meyer Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (excerpts), reading 8.

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What the Abrams reading shows is the Romantic narrowing of the literary tradition. What precisely did this narrowing involve? The German scholar, Ernst Curtius, has pointed out that prior to Romanticism, the main European literary tradition was one where all known 'authors' were 'authorities'; that is, authors were known traditionally as the sources of quotations, themes, examples and phrases for their successors. Romantic authors on the contrary understood themselves as rebelling against tradition in all its forms by virtue of the premium they placed upon being different and original. Whilst this stance did not mean rejection of all past literature, it did imply a 'sorting operation' to pick out a succession of writers who could be represented as a line of geniuses suitable to serve as Romantic predecessors. In the quaint words of the nineteenth-century aesthetic theorist, Walter Pater, this great tradition consisted of 'that House beautiful which the creative minds of all generations are always building together'. It was a community of geniuses.

The transformation of literary tradition is clear. It was inseparable from the emergence of a new form of literary commentary in which a literary work is read as a 'revelation of personality'. Abrams carefully describes this new kind of biographical criticism and follows this with illustrations of how two writers of the past, Homer and Shakespeare, were reconstructed as Romantic geniuses. The mechanisms of this Romantic reconstruction will be considered below.

As well as its break with literary conventions, the author's creative vision was understood in the Romantic perspective as also breaking through language itself so as directly to illuminate its objects. This point extends the anti-conventional dimension.

A consequence of believing that the author's vision has a sort of direct grasp on truth is a tendency for language to cease to be important in its own right; the reverse applied in the rhetorical tradition, where effective and stylish expression was accorded pride of place. The rhetorician endowed a thought with added force by expressing it in correctly ordered statements made persuasive by appropriate figures of speech. By contrast, Romantic authors prided themselves on the unadorned descriptions they gave of their subject matter, and in so doing they tended towards what could be termed a relegation of language. A famous expression of this important tendency in Romanticism occurred in Wordsworth's critical Preface to the second edition (1802) of *Lyrical Ballads*, a volume of poems written by himself and Coleridge, and first published in 1798.

> Having dwelt thus long on the subjects and aim of these poems, I shall request the reader's permission to apprise him of a few circumstances relating to their style, in order, among other reasons, that I may not be censured for not having performed what I never attempted. The reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and, I hope, are utterly rejected as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose. I have proposed to myself to imitate, and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language. They are, indeed, a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion, and I have made use of them as such; but I have endeavored utterly to reject them as a mechanical device of style... There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; I have taken as much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce it; this I have done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men, and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry. I do not know how, without being culpably particular, I can give my reader a more exact notion of the style in which I wished these poems to be written, than by informing him that I have at all times endeavored to look steadily at my subject, consequently, I hope that there is in these poems little falsehood of description, and that my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance. Something I must have gained by this practice, as it is friendly to one property of all good poetry, namely good sense; but it has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of poets. I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still further, having abstained from the use of many expressions, in themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly repeated by bad poets, till such feelings of disgust are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to overpower. (Wordsworth in Brett and Jones eds., 1968, pp.250-51)

What view of literary composition would follow, given this suspicion of all but the simplest, most transparent kinds of language? A view of literary composition as just another technical craft, no more or less mysterious than engineering and just as learnable, would be incompatible with the Romantic image of authorship for reasons already stated. A further answer concerns the problem posed by diction (or as Wordsworth called it, 'poetic diction') for Romantic literary theory. A literature of diction would be one which involved particular attention to the manipulative and stylish use of language for the purpose of conveying or teaching a message. As such, it would be closely related to a notion of literary composition as didactic, i.e., composed expressly to convey or teach a message.

We are now led to ask the following questions: Why is rhetoric inherently didactic? and Why does the expressive image of authorship encourage a distinction between literary writing on the one hand and didactic writing on the other? If rhetoric is defined as the art of persuasion, of artful manipulation of words to affect the reader or listener both morally and aesthetically, a view emerges of literary composition as the action of choosing a topic from an established inventory of topics, then selecting the appropriate techniques for persuasively communicating the chosen topic.

Didactic Writing

A common form of didactic writing was the verse essay, of which Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733) was one of the best-known examples. As you read the excerpt below, entitled 'Of the Nature and State of Man With Respect to Himself, as an Individual' try to think which particular elements in it would have seemed most objectionable to a Romantic writer like Wordsworth.

> Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
> The proper study of mankind is Man.
> Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
> A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
> With too much knowledge for the skeptic side,
> With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,
> He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest,
> In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;
> In doubt his mind or body to prefer,
> Born but to die, and reasoning but to err;
> Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
> Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
> Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;
> Still by himself abused, or disabused;
> Created half to rise, and half to fall;
> Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
> Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled:
> The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!
> (Pope in Mack, ed., 1950, pp.53-56)

From the Romantic perspective, there are at least two objections to this sort of procedure:

- The topic of the work, understood in this rhetorical way, is external to the author's personal experience as lived. Even where Romantic authors wrote on familiar topics, they nonetheless stressed what was extraordinary, unique and personal in them.

- The second objection has to do with the content of traditional didactic writing. Romanticism was associated with political protest and revolt. Nothing could be more alien to the Romantics' commitment to individual freedom and moral and political protest than the conformity to tradition, authority and compositional norms shown by rhetorical writing. Nothing could be more alien to this commitment to individual freedom than exhortations to conform to pre-ordained limits set by the authority of 'reason' and tradition. The example of didactic rhetorical writing given above with its homily on human presumptuousness and excesses exhibits many of the elements of the rhetorical tradition that the Romantics found most objectionable.

The modern antagonism between literary or artistic writing on the one hand and didactic or technical writing on the other, for instance between poetry and moral or political argument, is very deep. If you return to George Orwell's statement, 'Why I write', you can explore an instance of this opposition and a powerful negative opinion on the modern status of rhetoric.

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Re-read Orwell's 'Why I write', reading 1.

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SAQ 12

1. Orwell characterises his emergence as a serious writer by reference to his getting over a phase of 'rhetorical' verse-making in his youth.

   (a) Identify the disparaging references to writing poetry in the rhetorical tradition.

   (b) What is the alternative 'literary exercise' he engages in? He implies it was more significant for his development as a creative writer.

(cont'd over page)

(SAQ 12 continued)

2. How did Orwell's book *Homage to Catalonia* present in acute form the conflict between his moral and political obligation to expose the truth and his literary and aesthetic concern with producing a work of art?

Orwell's memoir testifies to a transformation in the status of rhetoric and in the relationship between art and didacticism. Whereas in the heyday of rhetorical literature interest in language and style served didactic aims, in Orwell's account it is in conflict with them. For Orwell, concern with language (the ring of certain words or phrases) belongs to the private, artistic, non-utilitarian side of himself. To place his rhetorical skills in the service of didactic but not artistic aims would be unacceptable. He would only wish to 'persuade' people insofar as they are open to persuasion when they are told the unvarnished truth. Rhetoric in politics is for Orwell the very definition of propaganda.

One of Orwell's major novels, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, underlines this point. The most important ministry in this imagined police-state utopia is the 'Ministry of Information', which endlessly turns out communiques full of misinformation and false promises. Their true nature is disguised by the artful way these communiques manipulate language. English is transformed into what Orwell disparagingly called 'Newspeak'. Rhetoric in politics is 'Newspeak', the manipulated and manipulating language of Big Brother and the language into which English is transformed. These are the depths to which the reputation of the venerable art of rhetoric has sunk in modern estimation.

The example of Orwell illustrates the antagonism between modern expressive literary writing and didactic writing that has a practical, technical, moral or political function. This antagonism parallels that dichotomy which presents the Romantic view of composition as spontaneous and untrammelled invention and the rhetorical view as routine and repetitive enslavement to convention. At this point, we might usefully recall our discussion of the Romantic flight from rhetorical convention; we isolated two aspects of rhetoric which were challenged by an expanding body of Romantic literary theory:

- Rhetorical literature's preoccupation with diction; the reader is distracted from the content of what is said and is drawn to focus on the clever way in which it is said. Rhetorical writing, for the Romantics, draws too much attention to its linguistic means.

- If what is said is independent of how it is said, then didactic writing becomes a problem. If literature is taken to be the expression of 'a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' (Wordsworth), there is no way of accepting the rhetorical notion of composition; Wordsworth's view of composition as a spontaneous expression of a poet's personal feelings is clearly incompatible with the idea of a poet's choosing one of a fixed set of prescribed topics on which to write and then calculating how to get the 'message' across.

4.1.2 Romanticism: in praise of the 'folk'

We have already mentioned another manifestation of the Romantic movement: the championing of 'folk' literature. The history of the Romantic 'discovery of the people' has been traced by Peter Burke in *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Burke shows how, at the very same time that the notion of the individual expressive author was becoming established, there was a parallel search to fix the origins of folk or popular art in a mysterious, anonymous collective author, namely the 'people'. This apparent paradox might seem less strange when it is recognised that the particular gift being attributed to the people was spontaneity, identified with the supposedly untaught and therefore natural forms of popular expression.

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Read Peter Burke, 'The discovery of the people' (excerpts), reading 9.

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SAQ 13

1. How could the Romantic notion of the people-as-collective-author be used as a counter-example to Becker's argument on the social character of artistic composition (reading 2)? What does the Romantic notion have in common with Becker's approach?
2. How would Burke's account of the Ossian 'forgery' illustrate Foucault's argument (section 2.3.2) that the name of the author functions as a means of classifying texts?
3. Which elements in Burke's account suggest that folk art was being championed insofar as it could be contrasted with classical rhetorical poetry of the time? What qualities were projected on to folk art to make this contrast possible?

4.2 Poems without authors: Homer and formulaic composition

Peter Burke's discussion of the Romantic discovery of the people reminds us that one of Romanticism's early manifestations involved the celebration of the anonymous 'expressions' of folk or popular culture. The 'collective author' of these ballads, dances, 'folksongs' (a new eighteenth-century word) and fairy tales was 'the people'. 'The people' are here represented as capable of being spontaneous and creative in their speech because untaught, i.e., unexposed, to the mannered education to which other classes of society were subjected (including the readers and writers of rhetorical poetry). The Romantic idea is of the possibility of natural masterpieces. Rhetorical poetry is one of the main polemical targets of this idea.

In this section we begin to challenge that Romantic viewpoint of folk literature. We do so by reference to Albert Lord's brilliant reconstruction of the methods of oral poetic composition employed both in the original Homeric epics and in the oral poetry which was still being composed and performed in country areas of eastern Europe in the 1930s. Needless to say, what emerges is a somewhat less idealised picture of oral culture than the Romantic one. From the viewpoint of our interest in authorship, our interest in the methods of oral epic composition revolves around two questions: To what extent is it appropriate to regard oral epic poets as authors of their poems? and What place does a rigidly conventionalised art form (as oral epic poetry turns out to be) allow for individual variation and virtuosity?

4.2.1 Homer: author or singer of tales?

In order to investigate problems posed by the ancient Homeric epic poems the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Albert Lord draws upon the new nineteenth-century practice of collecting folk compositions. His book, *The Singer of Tales*, also uses Milman Parry's work on the oral epic verse tradition still flourishing in early-twentieth century Yugoslavia. However, although the interest of both in oral epics derives from that Romantic interest in 'the people', Parry and Lord show that the 'romantic' assumptions which originally motivated the interest in folk epic were nearly all false.

Albert Lord's book is truly pathbreaking. It approaches the topic of epic poetry by posing the question, 'How was the poem made?'. The answer involves the following:

1. An investigation of the means of composing oral epic poetry which leads to a brilliant solution to the problem which has bedevilled scholars for centuries: How is oral epic poetry preserved and transmitted intact?

2. A demonstration that Parry's twentieth-century Yugoslavian oral epics are identical in form to Homer's epics (known to have been originally composed orally and only subsequently put in writing).

3. An argument that there is no such thing as a 'transitional' text which is composed partly orally, but by a poet who can read and write. For Lord, the acquisition of literacy makes oral composition impossible.

4. A suggestion of some possible reasons, primarily religious, why Homer might have been requested to allow his epic song to be put in writing - Lord is adamant that Homer himself would have seen no advantage in it.

Our selected readings concentrate on the first of these aspects of Lord's study of Homer.

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are 'by' Homer. Therefore Homer is, by definition, the author of these works. Historians and sociologists of literature in general and editors of Homer's works in particular have no compunction about representing Homer in this way. The following statement comes from a well known sociological-historical survey of literature by Diana Laurenson and Alan Swingewood:

> The early bards reproduced and composed songs and sagas and as such were the first authors ... the early writers were much more integrated into the social group than the estranged, free-floating writers of this century, whose work is frequently characterized by subjectivity and withdrawal. In Greece the epic writer Homer was closely involved with the values, fears, aims, and goals of his people, expressing their world view. (Laurenson and Swingewood, 1971, p.94)

However common it may be to describe Homer in this way as the first 'author', why is such a description anachronistic? That is to say, why does this way of categorising Homer entail inappropriate categories such as 'author' (which only arose in a subsequent culture characterised by written literature)? The problem becomes apparent as soon as you ask: Author of what?

As Lord points out, there is a good historical reason for believing that the Homeric epics were 'originally' composed orally and only subsequently written down. This is the basis of the problem of how the work could be preserved intact during the period when it was circulated only orally. Laurenson and Swingewood are not simply committing an elementary blunder in describing the illiterate Homer as a 'writer'. The more serious error consists in assuming that the conditions for attributing a 'work' to an 'author' are always present in all societies.

The crucial condition here is the non-availability of writing which would guarantee a relatively 'fixed text'. Other Homeric scholars would not describe him as a writer, yet in the way they frame the problem of Homer they show themselves to be unwittingly captivated by the picture of a poetic 'work' as a fixed, written text. The problem of how the unwritten epics were preserved, despite the vicissitudes associated with oral transmission, only arises if we take it for granted that there must be an identifiable original text (composed by one or more 'authors') to be preserved. Once one makes that assumption and proceeds to solve that problem, the mystery appears insoluble.

In his introductory chapter, Lord cites three common explanations for the preservation of Homer's oral 'texts':

1. (a) Multiple authorship. The poems were retold or rewritten by a series of poets either beginning or ending with Homer (how in that case to account for the integral qualities of the poems?).

   (b) The prodigious memories of people in oral (i.e., illiterate) cultures (again, could the poems be transmitted word-perfect, without undergoing what linguists call linguistic 'drift'?).

   (c) Redating the text in such a way as to place it after the coming of writing (difficult since poetry by no means availed itself of writing at the first opportunity).

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Read Hirst and Woolley (pp.33, 38-39). Here you will find a summary of Lord's arguments which will help to orient you through the excerpts from *The Singer of Tales* which you are about to look at.

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At this point note in particular Lord's suggestion that it is mistaken even to pose the question: How is the (original?) text preserved? Lord sets aside the problem of preservation in favour of the problem of how an oral epic song is made. Here again we see how the metaphor of production helps us to side-step certain obstacles to understanding literature thrown up by the expressive or Romantic image of authorship. In this case the Romantic image of the author gets in the way of understanding oral epics by encouraging a search for the individual 'originator(s)' of the poems and by the assumption that there must be an original poem; this is so because poetic composition in this view is always the expression of thoughts, feelings, etc. which originate within the poet's artistic or intellectual self.

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Now turn to Albert Lord, 'Singers: performance and training' (excerpts), reading 10.

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SAQ 14

1. What is wrong with describing an oral (unwritten) song as 'composed for performance'?
2. What, briefly, are the three stages of the apprenticeship in oral composition for the aspiring singer of tales?

Lord changes the terms of the Homer problem by drawing on Milman Parry's studies of the method of composition of Yugoslavian epic song in the early-twentieth century. This demonstrates the absence of an original text, which would imply that a song was originally composed for performance, at festivals, etc. But, as Lord shows, the Yugoslavian 'singers of tales' recorded by Parry composed 'their' traditional tales in performance, in a virtuoso display of controlled improvisation (10-20 ten-syllable lines per minute). Lord then demonstrates the structural affinities of those latter-day epic songs with the Homeric epics. Homer was no author but a celebrated 'singer of tales' (this comparison is carried out in later chapters of the book). In this way, the problem of preservation/transmission was resolved by reference to what is termed the formulaic mode of composition and the means by which such techniques are handed on to aspiring young singers/composers; in short, by reference to training in formulaic composition.

4.2.2 The technique of formulaic composition

The *Oxford English Dictionary* variously defines the word 'formula' as 'a set form of words in which something is defined ...' and '(Math.) A rule or principle expressed in algebraic symbols'.

Lord says that in his use of 'formula', the term involves an extension of its conventional meaning. Therefore, to understand a literary genre which is basically composed of 'formulae' but nonetheless allows for dazzling feats of improvisation by its composer/performers, we need to get hold of how the meaning of this concept is extended.

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Read Albert Lord, 'The formula' (excerpts), reading 11.

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SAQ 15

1. In what sense does Lord 'stretch' the concept of formula beyond its usual narrow dictionary meaning? How are formulaic verse compositions in this expanded sense distinguished from a mechanical stringing together of 'ossified clichés' which are recited from memory?
2. Why should singer and audience alike attach so little importance to originality?

The idea that a highly conventionalised art form based on long training nevertheless allows for and even requires individual improvisations might appear paradoxical. But Lord's discussion of formulaic composition firmly dispels this impression.

4.2.3 Formulaic composition and the Romantic image of 'folk' culture

Summing up our study of Lord's argument, in the *Singer of Tales* we have a scholarly attempt to depict a mode of composition which lies at the furthest remove from the Romantic image of great literature as essentially non-conventional, i.e., creative, spontaneous and free from 'artifice'. Lord's argument suggests that there is no necessity to view artists as creative personalities who seize on any means available to express their individual vision. In these terms it is inappropriate to regard Homer as an 'author' at all, let alone as a creative personality. Homer is rather a singer/composer. The argument also suggests why there is no necessity to regard literary conventions as antithetical to innovation.

In the first place, Lord has brought out the primarily formulaic structure of oral epic. Yet with its complex battery of 'conventions', traditional epic song is a most intricate art form which requires extraordinary feats of improvisation of its individual composers/performers. It requires of its singers a capacity to construct thought in music and verse. These thoughts-in-verse have to fit simultaneously not only the pattern or meaning of the story, but also the rhythmic, syntactic and acoustic patterns. And all this, at the very moment of reciting the poetry. In the second place, it is clear that for a listening audience an element of repetition is necessary for comprehension and pleasure. Whilst a singer of tales does more than string together stock phrases and sayings, he does not disdain them. They are useful to eke out the metre, or to mark the beginning of a new episode, and so on. 'Conventions' in this genre do not present obstacles to the singer's work of improvisation, but systematically provide for it. Apprenticeship in formulaic composition is a training in improvisation.

On the basis of our examination of how these 'poems without authors' are composed we can make several critical points on the Romantics' interpretation of the oral folk epic:

1. There could be no question of a collective authorship, since oral recitations of the same poem differ from singer to singer and from one performance to another.

2. Whilst oral epic poetry may well have appeared more natural and spontaneous to Romantic intellectuals and poets, especially when set beside some of the particularly mannered and artificial composition produced in eighteenth-century Europe, these epics were not the spontaneous product of the creative culture of 'the people'.

3. The Romantic view of oral epic breaks down over its characterisation of this literary form as a folk art form. It would seem that the epic verse recorded by Parry in Yugoslavia is structurally identical to the Homeric epics, being built up out of formulaic expressions. But the Homeric epics were the traditional poetry of courts and princes in earlier oral cultures. The implication is clear. There is nothing inherently 'folksy' about Yugoslavian peasant oral epics. Lord is very clear on this point, arguing that epic verse is from its origins associated with courtly, aristocratic circles. The status of a singer of tales was considerable because he sang for a noble audience. Furthermore, to identify oral epic as an expression of peasant culture is to mistake the accidental for the necessary. We have to do with an intricate product not of folk culture but of oral culture. Epic song is an oral form. If in the nineteenth century only country people could be found reciting oral poetry, this merely reflects the fact that they were the last social group to satisfy the most crucial prerequisite for this form: illiteracy. It follows that formulaic composition is not alien to sophisticated art forms cultivated by 'high society'. Only at the price of misunderstanding is the oral popular tradition enlisted in support of the romantic 'revolt against rhetoric'.

4.3 Rhetoric and the commonplace tradition

The next task is to understand rhetoric in its own terms rather than in those of Romantic literary values. The Romantics criticised rhetoric for being ornamental, didactic, commonplace, panegyric and latinate, but these charges, though valid in one sense, express a hostility towards certain features of the earlier culture which is new with the Romantics, and which we need not share. Indeed, to understand the nature and place of literary composition in this earlier period, we must refuse to share it. For the remainder of this section, we shall be trying to convey something of the general character of the 'rhetorical culture' that flourished in Europe from about the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries, especially with regard to prevailing notions of authorship, literary tradition, and literary composition.

4.3.1 What was an author? Literary tradition and authorship before Romanticism

We have seen that it is erroneous to attribute the 'authorship' of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* to Homer. Lord shows that from the standpoint of the study of how epic song is made there is no sense in speaking of an 'author' insofar as this assumes an original and stabilised text and one or more individuals primarily responsible for it. He also shows that it makes no sense to set Homer up as the first great author, since Homer, the singer of tales, belongs to a history prior to authorship.

In short, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are 'poems without authors'. This does not preclude the possibility that 'Homer' is or has become the name of an author. From the standpoint of present day publishing and of past readers, Homer's 'authorial' status is indisputable. That 'he' has been retrospectively constructed as an author in histories of literature is immaterial. As Foucault insisted, the category and the name of an author may have effects independently of whether the name refers to an actual individual who actually wrote the piece attributed to him or her. So even though the singer of tales belongs to the prehistory of authorship, the representation of Homer as an authorial figure must be included in any history of literature which constructs a literary tradition of 'great authors'. To explore how literature and authorship were understood before the emergence of the Romantic author we turn to a classic of literary history, Ernst Curtius's *European Literature in the Latin Middle Ages*.

Curtius reconstructs the historical complex of theological, rhetorical, political and philosophical education and mystical culture which he terms Latinity. 'Latinity' began in Ancient Rome and culminates in the period he calls the Latin Middle Ages, when Latin culture provided the framework for reading and writing literature.

The concept of Latinity is central to Curtius's claim that most European literature was produced within a rhetorical framework. Literature considered as a rhetorical art was a deliberate craft involving a prolonged school education in learning the imitation of traditional models and techniques of composition; in a word everything that is anathema to the Romantic image of literature.

Curtius describes the Latin Middle Ages as 'the crumbling Roman road from the antique to the modern world' (R12:2). The 'road' in question stretches from Ancient Rome to the twentieth century. Even in this century, although its importance has waned considerably, aspiring writers like the young George Orwell have been found cutting their teeth by writing Latin verse or English imitations of the Classic Latin poets. The concept of Latinity embraces the following dimensions:

1. In Classical Europe from Antiquity to the late-seventeenth century, Latin was regarded as the first language of the learned. Until the flowering of vernacular literatures from the twelfth century onwards, Latin was the written language, the 'Esperanto' of the learned of different regions.

2. Not only poetry but affairs of state (diplomacy, administration, law-making, etc.), science, education, and, of course, ecclesiastical practices and theological writings were conducted in Latin. (In Britain, in some public schools, Latin remains a compulsory subject in spite of being a dead language; its retention is justified in part as 'character training'.)

3. Latinity consists of more than the survival of a language and literature: it represents the survival of Ancient Rome as a model of political and religious culture and of artistic and literary ideals. Dante's *Divine Comedy* demonstrates this exemplary status of Ancient Roman culture, written as it is in 'imitation' of the *Aeneid*, the epic poem of the Latin poet Virgil. For plots, themes, metaphors, political and religious purposes, philosophical and cosmological doctrine, Dante primarily looks back to the long line of the *auctores* (a Latin term for both authors and authorities) of the tradition of Latin literature.

In the light of our earlier discussion, we would wish to know where 'Homer', the Greek singer of tales, fits into this tradition of Latinity. Curtius's study suggests answers: he discusses two ways in which Homer was represented in Latinity:

1. as the supreme authority on the art of rhetoric

2. as a source of wisdom for the initiated who can decipher the hidden secrets of his works.

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Read Ernst Curtius, 'Literature, education and the traditional author' (excerpts), reading 12.

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SAQ 16

1. Why was Homer hardly more than a great name to the Middle Ages?

2. Why nevertheless did Dante's bid for recognition require that 'the name had to be named', i.e., inserted at the head of the line or 'canon' of traditional authors comprising the 'bella scuola'?

3. What light does the course's methodological approach to authorship - in particular its refusal to identify 'the author' with 'the person' who writes a given work - shed on the 'canonisation' of Homer as the first great author by subsequent poets and literary commentators in the Latin literary tradition?

Perhaps the most striking feature of Curtius's account of how Homer was written into the medieval literary tradition is the contrast between the immense importance of his name and the irrelevance of what he wrote. Homer might aptly be described as the first of the Great Unread. But what did the status of author amount to in this venerable literary tradition? Casting back to Bonaventura's medieval classification of 'makers of books' (section 3.1), we might describe this status of pre-Romantic authorship as follows:

1. Though an author will repeat the work of others, he will also write his 'own' work, in the sense of adding new materials.

2. The concept of imitation provided for outdoing one's model; pre-Romantic authorship thus involved a certain competitiveness between contemporaries, a drive for fame.

3. To count as an author it was necessary to be established as an authority, 'canonised' within the tradition. But to be an author(ity) was not primarily to be accounted 'original' in the sense of being the one and only originator of some truth.

One topic of rhetorical writing was the praise of a great author. Grounds for praise ranged from the capacity to express a traditional truth better than anyone else to the impressiveness of the output. But as Curtius tells us, to be an author was, above all, to be reckoned a 'technical' authority and a repository of established wisdom. Authorship is thus recognised insofar as it signifies authoritative and established knowledge of a topic. There is little or no interest in authors as creative individual personalities.

Nothing is more central to this tradition of Latinity than rhetoric. Training in composition in accordance with rhetorical precepts long survives the demise of Latin as the primary language of learning. It is to the rudiments of a rhetorical education and its influence on literary composition that we now turn.

4.3.2 The commonplace tradition

You will certainly have heard the expression: 'Mere rhetoric!' and recognise its negative connotations. Rhetoric today is associated with emptiness or artificiality. In our discussion of George Orwell's 'Why I write', we saw how, for Orwell, 'rhetoric' in politics could only be a term of disparagement. It may therefore come as a surprise to learn that the art of rhetoric has been highly esteemed through most of the history of Western civilisation. It occupied a central place in education; for long periods it was thought indispensable to the presentation of any discourse with moral or political purpose; above all, the bulk of what even 'Romantic' literary criticism would include in the category of great literature was composed within a rhetorical framework.

But perhaps we need to be a little clearer about the chronology of the rhetorical tradition as a whole. You may find it helpful to think of it in three separate historical phases:

1. The rhetorical tradition in Antiquity. This phase can be dated from a century or so before Christ to the Fall of Rome in the fourth century A.D. It included among its most prominent practitioners figures such as Virgil, Cicero, Horace and Quintilian, all Roman writers of the first century A.D. Neither Curtius nor any of the other readings has much to say about this first phase of the tradition in its own terms, but it is, of course, a constant point of reference for subsequent phases, and therefore needs to be known about.

2. The rhetorical tradition in the Middle Ages. This, as you know, is the phase in which Curtius is mainly interested. It reached a high point in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the time of the 'High' Middle Ages, but it was quite strong for several centuries both before and after this period. Key figures here include the poets Dante and Chaucer. (See the time-line for help on this.)

3. The rhetorical tradition in the Renaissance. This third phase is the focus for an article you will be reading in a moment by Hanna Gray. It can be dated from the fifteenth century to the eighteenth, and can be thought of, in its earliest stages, as a conscious revival of certain features of the rhetoric of Antiquity. The third (and last) phase peters out in the eighteenth century with the coming of Romanticism.

We have seen that the Romantics viewed rhetoric as the antithesis of everything Romanticism stood for. But to describe rhetoric in terms of Romantic literary values is to fall into the same trap as the Romantic description of oral poetry: anachronism. So we should aim instead to understand rhetoric as our ancestors did. This would involve an introduction to 'rhetoric' that falls into three parts:

1. The value of rhetoric. Why was it so highly valued?

2. The study of rhetoric. As a school subject, what did rhetoric involve and how was it related to other areas of study?

3. The commonplaces of rhetoric. What were the forms of 'commonplace' wisdom that were so valued in rhetorical training?

1. The value of rhetoric

The historical distance which separates us from those ancestors who valued rhetoric should not mislead us into mistaking rhetoric for an ancient, pre-rational habit of thinking which the modern consciousness is entitled to reject on rational grounds. On the contrary, rhetoric received a new lease of life in Western intellectual culture at the time of the Renaissance, when ancient Roman rhetoric was reactivated as a vehicle of criticism of medieval scholarship. What did the Renaissance champions of rhetoric see in it? What qualities were lacking in medieval scholarship which the revival of the ancient art of rhetoric would make good? These questions are addressed in Hanna Gray's article on Renaissance humanism.

The 'humanists', so called, were the Classical scholars of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in Italy and elsewhere, whose enthusiastic rediscovery and dissemination of the original texts of Greek and Roman Antiquity is usually regarded as a major component of the Renaissance. ('Humanism' in this sense has nothing directly to do with the modern meanings of the term.)

The medieval phase of the rhetorical tradition, discussed by Curtius, developed something of a split between what we might call the memorial, intellectual, or truth value of the ancient authors - their value as repositories of traditional moral wisdom - and their technical value, as exemplary models of composition. We saw this duality exhibited in the medieval estimation of Homer. What the Renaissance humanists were urging against this 'Scholastic' duality of wisdom and technique was a reunification of the two under the banner of eloquence, which became, as Gray argues, the guiding principle of the rhetorical tradition at the time of the Renaissance.

To the humanists' way of thinking, to poets and philosophers such as Petrarch or Erasmus, medieval scholarship diminished man's significance through its narrow interpretation of Christianity. But more generally it was condemned by the humanists as scholastic and preoccupied with abstract theoretical questions to the neglect of human affairs.

This permits us to view rhetoric in a different light. The Romantics criticised earlier writing for being merely rhetorical; but in the Renaissance we see 'intellectuals' proudly defining themselves as rhetoricians whilst castigating medieval discourse for being 'merely intellectual'! From the rhetoricians' standpoint, truth was inseparable from well-ordered language. What was the good of a 'truth' that was not composed and presented in such a way as to inspire people to act on it, or live up to it?

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Read Hanna Gray, 'Renaissance humanism: the pursuit of eloquence' (excerpts), reading 13.

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SAQ 17

1. How did the Renaissance humanists distinguish rhetoric from sophistry?
2. Why did they call themselves orators?
3. What has eloquence to do with morality?

2. The study of rhetoric

In *European Literature in the Latin Middle Ages*, Curtius considers a number of issues related to rhetoric: the divisions of rhetoric as a school subject; the reasons for its central place in the curriculum and, more generally, in Renaissance activities in several other fields, particularly where the composition of poetry is concerned.

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Read Ernst Curtius, 'Study of rhetoric' (excerpts), reading 14. These pages are relatively straightforward and descriptive, although a few terms might be unfamiliar.

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SAQ 18

1. What were the traditional liberal arts?
2. What are three provinces of eloquence (or genres of oratory) designated by the tripartite division of the subject matter of rhetoric? Concentrate on the 'epideictic' genre, since this is the one most closely related to literature.
3. What are the five parts of the art of rhetoric? Give a short account of 'invention'.
4. What human attribute did the study of rhetoric especially seek to promote?

Gray performs a valuable service in helping us to see the virtues which champions of rhetoric saw in it. She brings out the need for rhetoric if knowledge was to be morally useful, 'actively persuasive' as opposed to 'merely intellectual'. However, it would be misleading to suppose that rhetoric only appeared in an unfavourable light when placed against the literary values of Romanticism. In other words, what put people off the study of rhetoric in the eighteenth century was not merely that it purveyed conventional wisdom when what was wanted was originality; nor was it merely that it persisted in mixing knowledge with polemic style when 'truth' came to be viewed as independent of language. Rather, there is another dimension to the value placed upon classic rhetoric by the orators: its Latinate qualities. As we saw, Latinity is crucial to the rhetorical tradition. Ancient Roman rhetoricians provided a model for the Renaissance orators both in their ideas and their commitment to welding wisdom on to stylish expression - there was no question of reviving rhetoric in its ancient practical dimension, i.e., as an art of persuasion aimed at improving oratorical performance in political assemblies and law courts. In the absence of equivalent political and legal outlets for rhetoric, it was the pedagogical concern with standards of written verbal correctness and virtuosity which the humanists took up. As Michael Baxandall puts it:

> The humanists took what opportunity there was for getting on their feet - weddings, funerals, the investiture of a magistrate, the beginning of an

> academic year - but these lacked urgency ... for the Renaissance, rhetoric must be taken primarily in the sense of a systematic study of verbal stylishness - words read more often than heard - based on the models and manuals of the classical rhetoricians. (Baxandall, 1971, p.48)

Baxandall also provides a concrete example of the sort of task a Renaissance schoolboy studying Latin grammar and rhetoric might be asked to perform, namely, the construction of 'periodic' sentences along the lines of the following example (which needs a careful reading) in the style of Cicero:

> Just as ball-players do not use skills proper to the gymnasium in their actual game, but yet their way of moving shows whether they have learned gymnastics or know nothing of it; and just as, when people are sketching something, even though they are not using the art of painting at that moment, yet it is clear whether they know how to paint or not: so too in these discourses in courts, assemblies, and Senate, even though the other liberal arts may not be brought into use particularly, yet it is very evident whether the speaker has just precipitated himself into this business of oratory only, or whether he has come to the task of speaking after a training in all the liberal arts. (Baxandall, 1971, p.22)

A periodic sentence combined a number of thoughts and sentences in four or more balanced clauses modelled on Latin - that language which survived long after it ceased to be spoken. Baxandall describes the periodic sentence as:

> the basic art form of the early humanists ... a test of prowess (it being difficult to construct an appropriately balanced sentence), a focus for criticism, the full flower of the Renaissance way with words. (Baxandall, 1971, p.21)

We can begin to appreciate why an eighteenth or nineteenth-century poet could get so incensed at a Classical style as laboured as this; no wonder folk poetry could appear 'natural' and free-flowing if this is the result of composing literature according to rhetorical principles. As Baxandall says, drawing for illustration on the Ciceronian period cited here:

> The humanists' preoccupation with the periodic sentence was one of their most anti-popular interests because its length and stylised word order denied so completely the structure of vernacular language, and the mark it left on later vernacular literature is often unsympathetic. (Baxandall, 1971, p.23)

Let us explain Baxandall's point. One difference between Latin and English is that the former is highly 'inflected' whereas the latter is highly 'uninflected'. Ezra Pound in *ABC of Reading* develops this point as follows:

> Greek and Latin are inflected, that is, nouns, verbs and adjectives have little tags, or wagging tails, and the tags tell whether the noun is subject or predicate; they indicate that which acts and that which is acted upon... The best way of using a language with these signs and labels attached to the words, is not the best way to use a language which has to be written in a certain order if it is to be clear. It makes a difference in English whether you say man sees dog ... [or] ... dog sees man. In Latin either *canis* or *canem*, *homo* or *hominem*, can come first without the sentence being the least bit ambiguous. When [the English poet] Milton writes
>
> 'Him who disobeys me disobeys'
>
> he is, quite simply, doing wrong to his mother tongue... Milton did it because he was chock a block with Latin. (Pound, 1960, pp.50-51)

It should be emphasised that European literature can boast periodic sentences whose stately beauty is not beyond our appreciation. Nevertheless, as we have seen with the ball-player sentence, we have to make an effort in order to appreciate the sort of pleasure the humanists took in periodic language, for example, in the construction of complicated antitheses or parallels, setting one thing against or alongside another. For a Renaissance humanist we must assume that such sentences with their patterns of suspense and resolution could generate their own pleasure.

3. The commonplaces of rhetoric

One way of measuring our historical distance from rhetoric is to look at the extent to which the meaning of terms from the study of rhetoric has either been lost or transformed. Three such words are particularly relevant to the present discussion: *sententiae*, *copia* and *loci communes*.

1. *Sententiae*. The closest equivalent to 'sententiae' nowadays is sententious(ness). It refers disparagingly to pronouncements that are pompous and weighty, stating the obvious in highflown language. In this modern sense a 'sententious' pronouncement is marked by its 'hollow' rhetoric. Here we have a term which has kept its original reference to rhetoric but the connotations of which have undergone a dramatic reversal from favourable to unfavourable. To see this we can turn back to Curtius's discussion of what the Middle Ages sought in the traditional authors (reading 12).

Sententiae were not merely linguistic sentences but 'judgements'. In particular, the term was originally used to refer to truths which were formulated after due consideration by a learned public body such as a law court or political assembly and handed down to present and future generations. Once again, in this way of thinking, truth is inseparable from language. Curtius takes the work of the French writer Rabelais as an illustration of how writers would embellish their work by drawing on the treasury of technical information and worldly wisdom which is to be found in the traditional authorities or 'auctores'. The example is fitting for our purposes, in that Rabelais's two books *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, both written between the years 1532 and 1564, are close to the Renaissance humanist literary and philosophical movement. Sententiae were distinguished from commonplace knowledge by their wit and brevity. This brevity had a crucial memorisation function in the era before print.

SAQ 19

Sententiae are 'mnemonic verses' (Curtius). Why did they occupy such an important place in the social organisation of knowledge before the age of printing?

2. *Copia.* The closest equivalent to 'copia' is copiousness. We speak of taking copious notes or of displaying a copious knowledge of a particular topic or, more often, across a range of topics. Range and quantity are the operative notions here. In this case no disparagement is implied. What has disappeared is the rhetorician's use of the notion of copia to praise works of literature. Imagine a modern novelist recommending his or her work in the way the sixteenth-century writer Rabelais does in the preface to his two books referred to by Curtius. Referring to the 'copious' range of auctores on which they draw, Rabelais describes them in the language of animal husbandry as 'goodly, well-fattened books', that is, well stocked with a variety of juicy morsels of worldly wisdom, choice phrases and sayings, instructive anecdotes, quotations, comparisons, drawn from across the range of traditional authors. The notion of copia within the rhetorical tradition is well described by Walter Ong in *Rhetoric, Romance and Technology*, where he defines the rhetorical significance of 'copiousness' so as to bring out:

(a) its relationship to oral culture

(b) its significance as the single most important means of acquiring the desirable range of erudition and eloquence available in the commonplace books.

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Read Walter Ong, 'Oral residue in Tudor prose style' (excerpts), reading 15.

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SAQ 20

1. What does Ong mean by 'oral residue' in literary writing?
2. Why is the capacity for copia pre-eminently valuable in the literature of a culture heavily imbued with 'oral residue'?
3. How were commonplace books supposed to assist one in the acquisition of copia?
4. In terms of Bonaventura's classification of 'makers of books', how would you classify Erasmus?

Ong shows that these manuals of utterly conventional wisdom and style, with their hundred-and-one ways of praising great rulers, formed the literary training manuals by which the giants of medieval and Renaissance European literature such as Dante, Rabelais and Shakespeare learned their art:

> Erasmus' quest of copia was that of the age. From his [commonplace book] collections, the waters of invention flowed off in all directions ... (R15:3).

Here we see a further indication that convention and invention need not be thought of as mutually exclusive but rather as mutually reciprocating. Ong's discussion of copia has a further dimension: his sense that Renaissance writers' 'quest of copia' was less a continuation of oral culture than an attempt to compensate for the Latinate character of writings they took as their models.

3. *Loci communes.* The closest thing to 'loci communes' nowadays is commonplaces. Here, in the case of sententiae, the term's connotations have shifted from favourable to unfavourable. The key connection of 'commonplace' to rhetoric is that commonplaces were the forms in which traditional truths were 'stored' and passed on. This meaning of commonplace is unfamiliar and requires further discussion, particularly in contrast to assumptions about the relation of truth and authorial originality in Romantic theory.

* * *

Read Walter Ong, 'Tudor writings on rhetoric, poetic and literary theory' (excerpts), reading 16.

* * *

SAQ 21

What are the two types of commonplace distinguished by Ong?

If we now recall the 'didactic' purposes of rhetorical literature, we can understand better why no tension arose between the didactic (moral-political) and the aesthetic (ornamental) aspects of rhetorical writing. For us, an author's determination to teach a message is seen as likely to take away from a work's artistic value. A predefined theme, particularly a conventional or commonplace theme, seems incompatible with a notion of literature as the expression of an author's individual way of experiencing the world. Yet in rhetorical writing the themes of a work are drawn from compendia of pre-defined commonplaces or truths recovered from old books. In these pre-Romantic terms, selecting a topic from the inventory does not compromise the work as art because the topic is itself already expressed in an artistic manner and because the idea is not to copy the original blindly but to 'imitate' it. This permits definite types of variation. Thus the aim of rhetorical poetry was, as Ong insists, to assert what poetry had always asserted - the eternal commonplace truths - but written in a fresh way.

We have explored the shift in meaning of the term, commonplace; we have seen how writers could select their subject matter from a commonplace book without necessarily prejudicing the aesthetic value of their writing. It remains first to examine how those who went to school in Renaissance times were trained in the use of commonplaces and then to determine the impact of rhetoric on literature prior to its falling from favour.

4.3.3 Rhetorical training and literary composition during the medieval and Renaissance periods

The first part of the next reading provides an interesting set of medieval answers to the questions of why and how people wrote poetry. The second provides a nice antidote to a modern reviewer's assumption that poetry constructed in accordance with the instructions of rhetorical handbooks must be dull and contrived.

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Read Ernst Curtius, 'Rhetorical poetry' (excerpts), reading 17. Concentrate in particular on the passage concerning exercises in poetry-writing on natural themes.

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SAQ 22

1. What is the chief difference between the experience of poetry in a medieval school and the most common experience of poetry in a modern school?
2. How would you sum up the dominant image of poetic composition in the Middle Ages? How does this make it easier to understand how it could be schoolwork?
3. In the second passage from Curtius, note briefly how the modern critic of medieval poetry is led into error by evaluating a poem about a swallow according to criteria derived from an 'expressive' image of authorship (especially by the modern assumption that 'experience' is superior to 'book-learning' as a prerequisite for good poetry).

How can good literature be written if the writer 'goes by the book', i.e., follows the conventions of a handbook of rhetoric? The answer involves a further demonstration that conventionality in literature is not necessarily in opposition to inventive writing. Michael Baxandall and Ezra Pound, as we saw, both discussed problems posed for English poets by the fact that the poetry on which they modelled their work was written in Latin. Latinate poetry written in English or other vernacular tongues could appear contrived, just as the commonplaces of rhetoric could be transformed into cliches. But commonplaces need not always have been seen in this way. Indeed, it is possible to argue that the richness of English literature in the Renaissance, notably Shakespeare, was not derived either from the presence of a few individual geniuses, or from some mystical notion about the 'quality of life' in the period, but from the culture-wide impact of a rhetorical training in primarily Latin composition.

To support our hypothesis, the first point is to recognise Walter Ong's claim that rhetoric did indeed have a massive influence not only on literature but also on the wider European intellectual and political culture of the time. The rhetorical heritage, according to Ong, 'appears simultaneously as theory, as pedagogical practice and as a determinant of the whole culture'.

In order to estimate the general currency of rhetoric, a point about the category of 'literature' needs to be understood. 'Literature' today is usually regarded as referring to a particular domain of writing. Although scientific researchers might speak of the 'literature' - the articles and books - published on a scientific subject, the primary reference of the word is to fictional writing: poetry, drama, prose (novel or short story). However, prior to and during the medieval and Renaissance periods, literature in this modern sense was not clearly distinguished from other types of writing. A wide range of 'non-literary' kinds of writing were directly influenced by rhetorical precepts and rules. They included letters, history, commemorations, political and diplomatic speeches, and preaching. Furthermore, poetry itself was used in a number of practical ways - for epitaphs, petitions, dedications, wills etc.

Having established the pervasive influence of rhetoric, the second stage of our argument will be to suggest that the Latinate nature of rhetorical composition was not necessarily a recipe for stiff, contrived composition. To this end, we will now turn to reading 18, Sister Joan Lechner's account of how English grammar schools trained 'schoolboys' (in fact, in those days it was not uncommon for grown men to be in the same class as eight-year olds) to compose poetry. The reading specifically concerns the practical exercises involved in the teaching of verse composition. The passage selected runs through three stages of this training:

1. Students make up their own commonplace books.

2. They have to memorise and produce variations on the aphoristic type of commonplaces (cf. Curtius, on the games employed to liven up this aspect of the training).

3. These *sententiae pueriles*, as they were called, were then used in conjunction with the rules of rhetorical composition in 'theme-building' exercises.

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Read Sister Joan Lechner, *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplace* (excerpts), reading 18.

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SAQ 23

1. How was a boy's own commonplace book compiled? What was the purpose of it?
2. In what way was the learning of sententiae more than a rote-learning exercise?
3. How were the commonplaces on the rules for composing speeches brought together in these theme-building exercises?

What compels our attention in this training process is the extent to which this vigorous drilling in rhetoric was simultaneously concerned not only with what the traditional authors said but equally with the way they said it, not only with memorisation but with training students in producing innumerable variations on the sententiae and themes they were required to read, learn, mark and inwardly digest. The exercises involved a training in expression. They taught versatility in expressing the same thought or theme in many different ways. Two general implications of this training can be isolated.

1. Ong describes the commonplace collections of Erasmus as constituting a 'make-up program for fluency'. This suggests that we might see the commonplaces and the rhetorical use of them as compensating for the restrictive effects of their Latinate form.

2. If rhetorical training produces this versatility in finding 'the right word' or a better way of phrasing something, and if the training was as widespread as Ong and Curtius claim, then we can see its success in achieving copia as more than compensating for the incompatibilities of the Latin and English language. We can begin to see the possibility that rhetorical training could foster a positive embellishment of the English language. Despite the fact that this schooling in the rhetorical use of language took place in Latin and involved composing verses in 'imitation' of authors who lived in the quite different culture of Ancient Rome, this revival of schooling in Classical rhetoric had an enormously invigorating effect on language and literature. It is to this revival of Classical rhetoric that Ezra Pound refers in his account of the reasons for the quality of Elizabethan English. Pound's sketch runs along very similar lines to Ong's insistence that the exuberance of Tudor English 'was not accidental, but programmed' (R16:6):

> The language of the Elizabethans is upholstered. The age of Shakespeare was the

> great age par excellence... When the language was not cut and dried, when the auditor liked the words... But the language was a made-up artificial speech... How did it get that way? The cult of Latin. After the thinness ... of medieval authors, the reading world was once again drunk on antiquity, Greece and Rome; the most educated wrote in Latin; each writer wanted to show that he knew more Latin than the other ... it was the gold rush for the largest vocabulary. (Pound, 1960, pp.71-72)

In this perspective, Elizabethan English with its wealth of allusions, proverbs and similes was less the reflection of an 'organic' national culture than an artefact of rhetorical training. This training was very far from being rooted in English culture. On the contrary, it pointed back to Ancient Rome. But rhetoric also promoted 'great literature'. It is this capacity of rhetorical training to augment students' repertoires of literary and linguistic expression which lies at the back of Walter Ong's anti-Romantic description of William Shakespeare as a superb retooler of thought and expression rather than a creator.

The evidence for this striking characterisation of Shakespeare is largely drawn from the monumental reconstruction by the literary historian, T.W. Baldwin, of the type of grammar school education which Shakespeare received and its impact on his writing. *Shakespere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (1945), the name of Baldwin's book, was a tag coined by Ben Jonson in the seventeenth century and misinterpreted by subsequent critics. Whereas Jonson merely wished to convey that Shakespeare was not a university scholar but 'only a learned grammarian', later scholars have used the tag to imply that Shakespeare's accomplishments are a matter of his authorial 'nature' and attributable to his inborn genius, rather than a taught skill or a craft well mastered. Baldwin's two volumes seek to estimate the extent of Shakespeare's training in Latin and Greek grammar (encompassing rhetoric) by registering the acquaintance with the sixteenth-century curriculum as displayed in his writings; this is done in order to see how far Shakespeare had progressed through that curriculum. Drawing on the findings of a philologist appropriately named Professor Root, Baldwin can show how, even in his most moving and seemingly 'natural' writings, Shakespeare is basically deploying the knowledge and literary skills he was taught at Stratford-upon-Avon Grammar School.

We can isolate at least three ways in which this rhetorical training left its mark on Shakespeare's work:

1. The most quotable of Shakespearian quotes - for instance, 'all the world's a stage' - often turn out to be a 'retooling' of commonplaces originating in Classical antiquity and handed down through the commonplace collections for anyone to utilise.

2. Stretches of the plays have the form of strict oratorical declamations, praising or blaming in the Classical didactic manner.

3. Far from being a deadening influence, the emphasis in rhetorical training on verbal disputation, combat and persuasion may even be credited with imbuing Shakespeare's theatre with some of its heightened sense of drama. As Ong puts it, 'Characters with words in their mouths put there by writers trained in rhetoric [i.e., in winning arguments, scoring points over others] were sure to generate friction when they met together on stage.'

Ong is careful not to represent these marks of rhetoric as taking away from Shakespeare's accomplishments. They merely demonstrate the inadequacy of the Romantic identification of literary accomplishment with a natural 'creativity' in the way in which the Victorian critic, Thomas Carlyle, contrasted Shakespeare's genius with the limiting theatrical conventions of the Globe Theatre:

> His works are so many windows, through which we see a glimpse of the world that was in him ... Such bursts, however, make us feel that the surrounding matter is not radiant; that it is, in part, temporary, conventional. Alas Shakespeare had to write for the Globe Playhouse: his great soul had to crush itself, as it could, into that and no other mould. (cited in Abrams, R8:3)

Against this view we have suggested that the framework of Renaissance rhetorical conventions did not impede Shakespeare's creative achievements but rather helped to make them possible.

5 CONCLUSION

We have furnished two extended illustrations of historical variations in the nature of authorship and literary composition. We have covered a wide range of material, yet all of it makes the same basic points:

1. The image of literary authorship with which we in the twentieth century are familiar is a historical phenomenon. Other eras thought of literary composition in strikingly different ways. In some eras, some forms of composition have no place for an author at all.

2. In challenging the assumption that the expressive image of the author is universal, we have picked out one aspect of that image for special criticism, namely, the notion that conventions are necessarily obstacles to literary accomplishment. This is the corollary of an identification of such accomplishment with the mysterious workings of the creative individual imagination. We have shown, however, that training in formulaic and rhetorical composition can actually foster innovation and variation. Formulaic composition involves acquiring an extraordinary capacity for controlled improvisation; rhetorical composition provides both the impetus and the means (in the form of commonplace books) to acquire an impressive repertoire of literary styles and expressions and the capacity for producing new and striking figures of speech, examples, comparisons.

   A subsidiary aspect of this challenge to the expressive image of the author, over and above the questioning of whether it really opposes invention to convention, has been our questioning of the necessity of the modern conflict between aesthetic and didactic aims in literature. In this case our criticism is less strident, since the causes of this modern tension are not limited to the rise of expressive criteria for artistic accomplishment in literature. They also lie in the complex developments which brought about a shift in what we called the social organisation of knowledge. These developments bring about a separation of wisdom and style which in the traditional organisation of knowledge were welded together. The demise of this way of thinking of truth and knowledge does not simply rest upon the Romantics' misinterpretations of rhetorical literature.

3. This brings us to a third and crucial consideration, namely, the restricted nature of our analysis of the expressive view of the author. Our analysis is restricted because the ascendancy of Romantic literary values is not to be explained solely in terms of the demise of rhetorical writing. The impact of print on the material appearance and contents of the book, on the status of authorship and on reading habits brought about

> a decisive shift in the way knowledge in society was organised. This could not but have effects in literature. Commonplaces functioned as an indispensable means of preserving and transmitting knowledge before print, as storehouses for the memory. Commonplaces were a public record office. When the function of preservation was mechanised by print, a crucial rationale for the older organisation of knowledge was removed.

We need therefore to recognise that the importance placed today on originality, independence and the individualisation of authorship is not some kind of basic error; and that while this image does involve a measure of Romantic myth, we cannot simply discard this myth.

Authorial independence

In this course, historical evidence is mustered against the idea that good art depends absolutely on freedom from constraint. This does not mean that in certain circumstances specific types of independence are not desirable and necessary. Our polemic is against independence in the abstract, i.e., as a general social and literary value. For example, it is misleading to cite Virginia Woolf's concern with the independence of women writers as an example of the general moral and aesthetic value placed on authorial independence. This only detracts from what specifically she was talking about - women writers. The slogan, 'a room of her own and five hundred a year', is not a demand for the absolute independence of creative writers from all social and literary constraints, but for women writers' financial independence from men. Her demand could perfectly well be coupled with a demand for an increase in state activities of patronage (Arts Council subsidies, facilities for publishing and distributing works) for women writers.

Authorial individuality

We have insisted on the crucial role of individuals in literary composition. This was no less the case in oral epic poetry than in a modern novel. Yet composers or writers do not always count as authors. When they do, they are not always regarded as the essential origin of their work (by dint of an individual creative imagination and experience). We do not have to treat this view of authorship as the sole form in which we can take seriously the role of the individual in literary composition.

The reality of an individual author's contribution to his or her works is more varied and mundane than this image of the creative author allows. Consider the unity which a literary work today is expected to possess and which distinguishes it from the compendious medieval book. A large part of the responsibility for this unity rests with the individual who wrote it. However, this unity has many determinants; it is far from being simply the reflection of conception by a single mind. Publishers demand a measure of unity - and their editors will typically request that a submitted manuscript be revised for publication, for example, by means of new paragraphs linking one section of the book to another to form a recognisable and persuasive argument. It is not the author's 'experience' but public criteria and commercial judgements which determine such coherence of argument. Certainly individual authors are given responsibility for producing this relative unity, but this, like their capacity for adopting a critical attitude, is a socially constructed and attributed capacity.

Authorial originality

Nothing we have said on the productive effects of literary conventions should be taken as a blanket criticism of originality in literature. The principal writer of this study guide would not be above taking pride in the way it departs from the existing range of sociological and historical treatments of authorship; nor could he think of any good reason for not indulging in a spot of author's pride. What has been criticised is the view of conventions as necessary obstacles to innovation.

One consequence of our stress on the facilitating effects of conventions where innovation is concerned might be a partial return to a more Classical understanding of the practice of imitation and repetition. Paradoxical as it may seem, if we take the traditional view of literature as imitation (*mimesis*) seriously, 'repetition' is no longer necessarily equivalent to 'more of the same'. And even where it is equivalent, there is pleasure in certain repetitions, as any child or reader knows. Granted, we view certain repeated phrases as clichés. However, to concede this as a modern fact of life does not involve taking on board all of the 'Romantic baggage'.

How might we shed the Romantic mythology surrounding originality without ceasing to place some value upon it? Here you may consult the last reading in the course, from Osborne Hardison's *The Enduring Monument*.

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Read Osborne Hardison, *The Enduring Monument: A Study of the Ideas of Praise in Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice* (excerpts), reading 19.

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This excerpt revolves around the paradox that the best of Renaissance literary commentary, much of it inseparable from manuals of rhetoric, may pale by comparison with the best of modern literary commentary; yet the former was actually useful to and used by Renaissance writers, whilst the latter (without detracting from its virtues as literary criticism) is often useless to writers of literature.

The modern writer is not much helped in the task of writing by a notion such as that proposed by the Romantic poet Shelley, whereby when composition begins, inspiration must already be on the decline. Faced with the blank page, a writer will most probably be helped very little by the sort of remark that characterises modern criticism, for example, as Hardison amusingly notes: 'Burn with a bright flame!'. The fact that the routines of rhetorical training were more useful to practising writers than inspired Romantic criticism is a fitting paradox on which to end the course.

TUTORIAL TWO

The agenda for this second tutorial presumes that you will have worked through sections 4 and 5 of the study guide together with readings 7-19. This is a substantial amount of work. In view of the amount of material covered in section 4, discussion at this tutorial will tend to concentrate fairly selectively on what are perhaps points of greater difficulty and controversy in respect to the completion of the assessment item:

1. Formulaic composition. Why does it fail to fit the Romantic image of authorship?

   Concentrate on SAQs 13-15 and the remarks on folk culture and the relations between formulaic composition and originality in the study guide at section 4.2.3. The Burke reading (reading 9) also demands attention.

2. What was the rhetorical tradition?

   Review discussion of the historical development of the rhetorical tradition in European culture. We shall be particularly concerned with identifying distinctive features of rhetorical modes of literary composition, the use of commonplace books, etc. in education; and with the relationship between the rhetorical tradition and print technology.

3. Does the course suggest that the expressive image of authorship should be altogether jettisoned?

   As a lead-in to discussion of the conclusion to the study guide, the question of authorship of this course could be posed.

If you cannot or do not wish to attend this tutorial, you should take particular care about completing the SAQs in sections 4 and 5, and reviewing your answers against the answers provided at the back of this study guide.

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ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

SAQ 1 (p.18)

(a) Originality. p.1: adolescent 'literary exercise' in composing subjective description of his life and surroundings. Originality is suggested by its being distinguished from 'made-to-order stuff' such as 'occasional verse' commissioned for school magazines; and by the involuntary nature of the exercise. On the whole Orwell modestly refrains from directly claiming originality on his own behalf.

(b) Individuality. p.1: lonely and unpopular as a schoolboy. p.2: 'egotistic' motivation for writing. Again, Orwell claims no moral virtue in his individuality; but see comment under 'Moral authority', below. p.4: love of words, prose style. Scraps of useless information seen as an individual idiosyncracy distinguished from Orwell's sense of his public non-individual duty to write on political issues.

(c) Independence. p.2: egotistic motivation again. Contrast between masses 'who ... live chiefly for others' and gifted minority who 'live their own lives', are less dependent on money, etc.

(d) Moral authority. pp.3-4: assumption of moral responsibility to write 'against totalitarianism' without sacrificing moral and aesthetic integrity. Commitment to writing the truth. What (at the level of claims about himself) he lacks in the moral purity of his individual motives for writing he more than makes up for in veracity.

(e) Veracity. pp.1-2: literary exercises in meticulous description of surroundings. pp.3-4: the 'problem of truthfulness' posed in relation to the book *Homage to Catalonia* (e.g. 'I write ... because there is some lie that I want to expose ...').

SAQ 2 (p.19)

1. Not everyone who writes a book is a professional writer, e.g. politicians who write their autobiography.

2. Not all professional writers would be thought of as creative or original, e.g. writers of popular thrillers.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SAQ 3 (p.22)

1. Becker persists in identifying true art with the creative work of an individual even though

   (a) he or she requires support personnel for the finished product

   (b) the respective statuses of 'artist' and 'support personnel' are socially defined and historically variable.

   Nevertheless, for Becker there must always be someone who occupies the role of creative artist.

2. He identifies true art with creativity and relatedly maintains the central idea of the expressive image that there is an essential conflict between creativity and convention. For instance, he says in R2:8

   > we can understand any work [of art] as the product of a choice between conventional ease ... and unconventional trouble. (emphasis added)

SAQ 4 (p.25)

There are at least two literary genres in which authors' names don't always function as the main means of classification, of attracting readers, etc.:

(a) Certain types of thriller are 'known' (i.e., acquire a 'name' or reputation for being a 'good read') not via the name of their author but through the currency of the name of their heroic main character, e.g. people are more likely to seek out a 'James Bond novel' than a book by Ian Fleming.

(b) Similarly the identity of individual authors plays little part in creating the huge demand for 'Mills and Boon' stories. Here the name of the publishing house is the primary means of drawing attention to a certain genre of inexpensive low-brow romantic literature.

In neither case are their authors the chief means by which the books are known, as 'Shakespeare' is the means by which plays and sonnets attributed to the Bard are classified. We thus see that not automatically, but only under certain social and cultural conditions does the name of the author function as the means of identifying and classifying his or her work.

SAQ 5 (p.31)

The dignity attached to copying is evidenced by the fact that in Christian sermons the figure of the scribe was employed as an embodiment of Christian virtue. It is explicable when you consider what an elaborate and socially necessary business copying was:

(a) The elaborate rituals of manuscript writing (e.g. the need to use a pumice stone before commencing a new line), or the solemnity of the practice (e.g. the need for a system of sign language by the monks in the scriptorium).

(b) The difficulties of accurate copying, particularly in the light of the fact that copyists' primary experience of language was oral (cf. reading 5 for development of this point).

SAQ 6 (p.32)

Becker's distinction breaks down firstly around the fact that Bonaventura's classification is not hierarchical. Thus the scribe has a dignified status; commentators and compilers may become as intellectually respected and famous as authors (cf. reading 15 on the compendious books compiled by the noted scholar Erasmus). The distinction between 'technical' and 'original' is simply not drawn with the unvarying sharpness familiar to us.

SAQ 7 (p.34)

The title page originated around 1475 when printers left the *recto* on page 1 blank on account of its tendency to soil, beginning the typescript on the *verso*. The blank was initially filled by a short title and author's name, if appropriate. Gradually, increasingly ornate decoration and ever longer titles were introduced, sometimes accompanied by verse written either by authors or by their friends. In other words the main object was to fill the page. Title pages thus did not originate as a means of drawing attention to the author.

SAQ 8 (p.35)

1. (a) The three passages are located on p.36: 'Books therefore tended to take the form of compendia ... as in books of hours'; pp.37-38: 'But the necessities of memory also affected the forms of order ... of knowledge'. Here the argument is that critical selection and rejection is difficult when knowledge is organised in compendious forms such as the summa; and p.41: 'The typical medieval "book" was ... the binding for a number of manuscripts' - like a student's notebook.

(b) Because there is no requirement that a compendium book should possess any unity either in respect to its content or even in respect to its presentation (e.g. differences in handwriting).

2. Medieval compendia reflect a view of knowledge as a timeless, impersonal domain which may be appropriated by anyone. Even if the person who assembled the compendium added new materials and hence qualified as an author (according to Bonaventura's classification), this is incidental to the main purpose of the compendium which is to make available a stock of traditional knowledge.

SAQ 9 (pp.41-42)

1. The effect of 'wide dissemination' does not only consist in the increase in the readership of a given text (due to the increase in available copies of the text). At least as important, where the shift in the way knowledge is socially organised is concerned, is the fact that printing increases the number of different texts which are available to individual readers. This encouraged a more critical, selective attitude towards knowledge by exposing readers to a broader range of ideas and by facilitating comparisons between them.

2. Printing 'fixes' texts in the sense of eliminating the variability from one copy of a given text to the next. Variability was unavoidable when texts were copied by hand. Today, for example, every serious English-speaking student of the writings of Sigmund Freud can consult the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Writings of Sigmund Freud.*

3. Although standardisation doesn't of itself eliminate error (it may on the contrary disseminate and perpetuate it) the relative textual uniformity which even early and crude printing techniques made possible (R6:3) at least made it more likely that one or more readers will spot these errors (particularly a 'howler' such as 'Thou shalt commit adultery'). Moreover, standardisation makes it possible to attach a list of these errors ('errata') to subsequent copies of the faulty edition or to amend the copy in subsequent editions.

4. Firstly, the Reformation, with its demand that the people be instructed by Bible reading (as opposed to the sermons of priests) produced a need not only for Bibles, but also for grammar books and reading matter for beginners. Secondly, the centralisation of political administration produced a tendency towards standardisation of national language and a downgrading of local dialects and languages (cf. Hirst and Woolley, p.39).

5. Standardisation helped to sharpen people's awareness of the diversity of individuals and social groups, e.g. in

respect of costumery, but, most importantly in respect of authorship, the individuality of faces (R6:4); cf. Eisenstein 'the more standardised the type...the more compelling the sense of an idiosyncratic personal self' (R6:3). 'Typographical fixity' (the prevention of 'drift' etc.) promotes the possibility of criticism; makes an individual author's particular contribution to or modification of a field of knowledge or a genre of literature more visible; makes possible a new focus of attention, away from the accomplishment of the work of art on its own to the personality, idiosyncracies, and creative activity of its 'author'; and finally establishes the need for a category of literary property.

6. The historical connection between 'preservability' and individual 'property in the word' is summarised in Hirst and Woolley, pp.41-42. Typographical fixity 'permits the assignation of limits [to a text, which] in turn permits us to mark off the domain of an author, who can then advance a proprietal claim to it'. Prior to print, when 'copying' was rife, with all its inaccuracies, it was virtually impossible to demarcate 'the text written by x' from its copies and variations. Eisenstein further points out how an author's pride was fed by the possibility of identifying a text with the individual who wrote it. Typographical fixity makes this possible by stabilising the author's text as a fixed, widely available, multi-reproducible identity. She notes for instance how the question of the 'authorship' of the Bible tends to force itself, however inappropriately, upon people as a result of print (R6:5,7,8).

7. We have seen that the printed word sharpens the distinction between the original and the derivative. Respect for the classic authors was partly undermined when they were read in print, for this made the extent of their 'borrowings' all too apparent - a realisation which could then provoke, for example, Defoe's allegation of Homer's plagiarism (R6:10, note 1).

8. 'Amplification' and 'reinforcement' refer to the enormous increase in the number of occasions on which a given phrase or statement, chapter or verse is enunciated, once it appears in print. The most important effect of this augmented repetition for our purposes is the transformation of 'archetypes' into 'stereotypes'. That is, traditional wise sayings purveying traditional unchanging truths, such as 'one swallow doesn't make a summer', take on the appearance of clichés.

SAQ 10 (p.45)

Eisenstein notes the coupling of authors and inventors as beneficiaries of proprietary rights over their products in the American Constitution (R6:8). She then recalls the historical origin of this coupling in the figure of the eponymous author that emerged in the course of the fifteenth century. Usually inventors, e.g. of mechanical calculators, such people made a name for themselves and achieved commercial success by simultaneously patenting their product, adopting the role of author and publicising their work in the form of technical manuals. These typically disclosed an address where the gadget in question could be purchased and generally sung its praises (R6:8-10).

SAQ 11 (p.49)

The four propositions are roughly as follows:

1. Lyric poetry, being the purest expression of feeling, is the highest, most valued kind of poetry. (Previously the epic and tragedy, for example, had been more valued.)

2. Poets are born, not made (because emotional sensitivity, which is the essential poetic characteristic, is innate).

3. True poetry is not concerned with external objects or scenes, but with internal states of feeling. (The external world is important only as a source of symbols for human feelings.)

4. True poetry is not addressed to an audience, but to the poet himself. (Poems written with an audience in mind other than the poet himself are said to be 'rhetorical', hence insincere, non-spontaneous, and inferior.)

SAQ 12 (pp.55-56)

1. (a) Most of the disparaging references to ('pitiful') rhetorical verse are on p.1: references to 'patriotic', and 'Georgian' and 'occasional' verse, plus a rhyming play 'in imitation of [the Ancient Greek poet] Aristophanes'.

   (b) The alternative exercise is at once more personal and inward ('a sort of diary existing only in the mind') and more objective than the rhetorical exercises ('a mere description of what I was doing and the things I saw'). This 'meticulous descriptive quality' (p.2), according to Orwell, overshadows the fact that the continuous story about himself was (as he admits) inflected by different styles of language derived from admired writers. The expressive image of authorship persistently downplays the 'medium' of language in its truth claims.

2. His political priorities forced him, for instance, into a polemic on behalf of the ultra-leftists (Trotskyists) which would, as he realised, soon have only a local historical interest. The point of his aesthetic 'regard for form', of course, is that a mark of aesthetic work is that a book shall be of an interest which extends beyond the confines of the time and circumstances in which it was produced.

SAQ 13 (p.57)

1. Becker's concept of an artistic 'division of labour' assumes, as we have noted, that there must always be some individual to whom the creative component of a work of art can be attributed. The Romantics insist that no individual is responsible for great folk literature. However, both Becker and the Romantics assume:

   (a) that what is great in literature is its creative component

   (b) that this involves a departure from impersonal rules

   (c) that this creative component shall be traceable to a 'human' origin.

   For Becker, this human origin is an individual; for the Romantic enthusiasts of folk art and literature, the creative origin is located in 'face-to-face' rural communities whose creative impulse has not been stifled by education.

2. Burke brings out the importance of assigning the name of an individual to a group of texts, as his or her work, if the texts are to be treated as serious literature in this 'post-printing' era. That we have to do with a social status is clear from the fact that the 'forgery' which issued in 'Ossian' was not qualitatively different from the 'improvements' perpetrated by editors on anonymous folk songs, tales and poetry (cf. R9:4).

3. When folk poetry is praised for its 'pleasing simplicity and many artless graces' (R9:2), in historical context this signifies an attack on 'rhetorical' poetry insofar as it was indeed a complicated and (at least in a neutral sense) contrived literary form, which minimised the role of a free-floating spontaneity of expression in favour of a complex of poetic and aesthetic conventions. The revolt against the classical unities of time, place and action (e.g. the rule that the action of a play should not cover periods of time longer than the time of

the play itself) are another facet of this revolt against rhetoric (R9:2-3).

SAQ 14 (p.61)

1. An oral song is always (re)composed in the act of performance; it is a highly conventionalised, controlled act of improvisation.

2. According to Lord, the three stages of training in oral composition/performance are:

   (a) sitting at the feet of an accomplished singer of tales in order to 'imbibe the rhythm of the singing and ... of the thoughts as they are expressed in song'.

   (b) beginning to sing oneself, to imitate one's teacher; he repeatedly deploys a number of the 'formulae' which form the foundation stone of oral epic song. This stage ends when the apprentice can just about improvise and sing an entire song to the satisfaction of an audience.

   (c) increasing one's repertoire of songs and formulae; learning the art of embellishing the song or story, or lengthening and shortening it according to the occasion; in short, acquiring virtuosity and a freedom to manoeuvre within this poetic medium.

SAQ 15 (p.62)

1. The expansion of the meaning of formula is manifest when Lord identifies the formulaic component of epic song not only with set forms of words such as 'once upon a time' but also with the 'patterns of formulaic expressions'. This departure from the standard meaning of formula is necessary in order to take into account the following features of an oral epic poem:

   (a) The narrative is in verse.

   (b) It is sung or chanted to the accompaniment of a musical instrument.

   (c) It has to be composed as it is actually being recited.

   (d) Performances must differ according to the occasion.

   There are two broad aspects to this expansion of the concept of formula which distinguish formulaic poetry from a mechanical putting together of stock phrases.

   (a) Syntactic formulaic patterns. Simple examples cited by Lord are 'opened war', 'writes a letter',

'... spoke, he uttered a word' where the names of different agents may be substituted. Substitutability of one or more components of the expression is the key point. It is this which makes the formulaic pattern of expression an appropriate instrument of building up complex constellations of formulae under the improvisatory conditions of performance.

(b) Rhythmic, melodic and acoustic patterns. Remember that the oral epic must be sung to the accompaniment of an instrument. In the above example, proper names are only intersubstitutable without changing the rest of the formulaic expression if they have a certain number of syllables. Again, certain names would be more aesthetically effective than others. For instance, they would improve the rhythmic and the melodic sound of a line, e.g. if it begins with the same letter as the verb which follows it (this is usually called 'alliteration' as in 'Robin ran round the rock'), cf. in particular R11:4-5. And this is to say nothing of the requirement to find the words that will convey the meaning of the old song. The word 'formula' retains its conventional connotations of familiarity and repeatability. Yet what is repeated is never quite identical, since it is a question of a combination of melodic, metric, syntactic and acoustic patterns which only yield fully-fledged 'formulae' in the actual performance of an epic song. The practice of filling out and the deployment of these formulaic patterns is thus far removed from a practice of stringing together a set of remembered cliches of the order of 'once upon a time' and 'they all lived happily ever after'. Lord's comparison between composing/performing an epic song and speaking in one's native tongue reinforces this point (R11:5).

2. Relative to the primary concern of the singer to capture the essence and flavour of the traditional story/song, originality is merely a by-product, a means to an end, necessitated by the exigencies of composition-in-performance. Why should originality be sought for its own sake, independently of the social valuation of originality which arose with Romanticism?

SAQ 16 (p.66)

1. Because the primary language of the learned was Latin and Homer's epics were only available in a poor and abbreviated Latin translation which was little read.

2. Because the primary model for Dante's work was Virgil's *Aeneid* which was a reworking of themes from Homer's *Odyssey*; and because in this pre-Romantic literary

tradition, new work is, as a matter of custom and practice, always presented within, and draws inspiration, themes, expressions, etc. from, a framework of traditional knowledges.

3. The installation of Homer as the first and greatest author underlines the point stressed throughout the course that authorship (and by implication its history) is irreducible to the thought, doings and influence of persons who bear the names of famous authors. The history of authorship in Curtius's account clearly involves treating authorship as a status (the fact that the term author in its traditional Latin sense was inseparable from 'authority' underlines the fact that authorship is in part a prestigious category). Curtius's discussion also illustrates the point that the name of an author can function for example as a means of classification, or in the case of Dante's use of Homer as a means of legitimising his (Dante's) poetic aims independently of whether or how it is attached to a 'real' individual.

SAQ 17 (p.69)

1. Sophistry means the use of argument for purposes of deception. Whilst all deception entails the use of language for something other than rational demonstration of truth, the reverse is not the case. Rhetorical argument is concerned with more than rational demonstration, but this 'more' is not for purposes of deception; on the contrary the purpose of rhetoric is to foster the desire for virtue and truth (and on the other hand to expose evil doing, including deception) by expressing them in the most positive and attractive way.

2. Men such as Petrarch staked their worth and reputation on the cultivation of eloquence. They called themselves orators firstly, because their favourite models of eloquence derived from the orators of Ancient Rome (notably Cicero); and secondly, because the vocation of orator entailed a notion of a non-specialist education which would equip a person with wisdom, virtue and eloquence.

3. Eloquence (like any other 'good') may of course be used for immoral purposes, but its highest purpose is to promote morality. How? It is assumed that vice is frequently based on ignorance; that knowledge can and should be employed in such a way as to be relevant to people's lives; but that this utility of truth depends upon 'bringing it home' to people in the most vivid and forceful and appealing way. Belief in the ethical purpose of rhetoric depends, as Gray says, on a faith (incredible to us) in the power of 'great words' to move people. However the orator's downgrading of 'abstract' knowledge in favour of useful knowledge that connects

with people's lives is closer to modern beliefs and values.

SAQ 18 (p.70)

1. The traditional 'liberal arts' comprised grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy.

2. Classically, there were three sorts of rhetoric: judicial, deliberative (public speaking in political assemblies) and epideictic. Epideictic rhetoric was given over to the praise of gods and men. Eulogies were composed in accordance with formal rules on momentous occasions, e.g. funerals and birthdays.

3. The art of composing a rhetorical speech was traditionally divided into five parts; these are itemised in R14:5. 'Invention' concerns the order of composition and exposition of a given sort of oration. This order is also set out in R14:5. The phase of argumentation is of particular interest for our subsequent discussion of 'the commonplaces' in section 4.3.2.

4. Eloquence, in the service of the good.

SAQ 19 (p.73)

Because they functioned as something akin to a public record office of learning. As we saw in section 3, prior to print the public organisation of knowledge was dominated by the problem of hanging on to it, of preserving it against the dangers of loss, 'corruption' through poor copying, etc. This is why 'important' knowledge had to be cast in a form such that it could readily be memorised, or at any rate easily able to be retrieved from a 'commonplace book' in which it was stored.

SAQ 20 (p.74)

1. Oral residues refers to traces of the pre-dominance of oral, i.e., pre-literate culture in works of poetry, e.g. indications that the work was originally recited publicly rather than produced for a reading public, such as 'What you are about to hear is true' (cf. R15:1 for Ong's definition).

2. Because knowledge as such was a far more precious commodity than it is today by dint of its rarity, inaccessibility, and vulnerability to loss by fire, political despotism, etc. An individual with copia was therefore possessed of a far greater 'intellectual capital' than a 'walking encyclopaedia' today would be thought to possess.

3. Copia is a combination of erudition and eloquence. Commonplace books helped in the acquisition of these qualities, in that these collections contained both all you could ever wish to know about a given topic and also a multiplicity of different ways of expressing oneself on that topic.

4. In Bonaventura's terms, Erasmus was for the most part a compiler ('compilator') since, as Ong tells us, the task consisted in collating material written by others. Note Ong's judgement that he was more than an individual writer: he was an institution. His educational purposes - to make traditional wisdom and style more easily accessible to people - could be rated as more important than the purposes of an author.

SAQ 21 (p.75)

1. Commonplace has two related meanings.

   (a) The common places could refer to topics or headings, i.e., the places where different sorts of knowledge or modes of expression (e.g. to do with kingship or friendship) were stored.

   (b) Alternatively the term could refer to the sententiae or phrases (e.g. ways of praising a ruler) which were so stored under those headings.

SAQ 22 (p.76)

1. In a modern school you read, discuss and learn how to write critical appreciations of poems. In an Elizabethan school you were taught to write verse; reading Classical poets was only a preliminary to 'imitating' them.

2. Ninety-nine per cent perspiration and one per cent inspiration. Even the latter is attributable to one's Muse, i.e., it was arduous work and a feat of technical skill. Note Curtius's comment (R17:1) on a young man who advertised that he had commenced to write poetry as a sign of having spurned his previously dissolute life, i.e., he had become a reformed character. A far cry from the Romantic image of the rebellious poet! Poetic composition was not regarded as a vocation only for a small artistically gifted minority.

3. The critic's assumption is that the 'freshness' of the poem, the lack of poetic clichés, is necessarily an indication that its author has not gone 'by the book' in composing it, but rather 'expressed' his unique personal experience of the bird. Far from it - the poem, by all accounts a thing of some beauty, was composed strictly in accordance with the rules for composing graceful panegyrics on a set list of themes (gardens, swallows, love).

SAQ 23 (p.78)

1. The grammar school students copied examples of arguments or choice phrases and gobbits of information from their reading of the auctores. Where possible, the examples were organised under rough headings. The purpose of the exercise was to build up a sort of 'memorybank' for the student. See R18:1.

2. Turning out sententiae pueriles (aphorisms composed by the young) was more than a rote-learning exercise because it involved, for example, not just translating an English saying into Latin but doing so in all possible grammatical variations. It therefore involved teaching students to acquire versatility in composition.

3. Initially students would be required to expand a simple sententia in accordance with the divisions of oratory. Beginning with an *exordium* introducing the subject, the student would proceed through the order of rhetorical exposition of a subject as outlined in Curtius, reading 17 (narration, argument, refutation, conclusion). Theme building was then expanded in length and complexity, students being trained how to bring in and rework ancient proverbs, historical parallels and so on. The complexity of the exercises is clearly brought out by Lechner, R18:2-3.

CHRONOLOGY

Periods			Dates	Events
			BC	
ANTIQUITY		Ancient Greece	900	Homeric poems
			444c.	Aristophanes born (Greek comic-playwright)
		Ancient Rome	106	Cicero b. (Roman orator)
			70	Virgil b. (Roman poet, *The Aeneid*)
			AD	
MIDDLE AGES (Medieval period)		'Latinity'	1221	Saint Bonaventura b.
			1265	Dante b. (Italian poet, *The Divine Comedy*)
			1304	Petrarch b. (Italian poet)
			1343	Chaucer b. (English poet, *The Canterbury Tales*)
RENAISSANCE			1440	Gutenberg's invention of moveable type
		Tudor England	1466	Erasmus b.
	REFORMATION		1495	Rabelais b. (French writer)
		Elizabethan England	1564	Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe b. (English playwrights)
			1573	Ben Jonson b. (English playwright)
			1608	John Milton b. (English poet, *Paradise Lost*)
			1611	The King James Bible
			1628	John Bunyan b. (*The Pilgrim's Progress*)
			1688	Alexander Pope b.

ENLIGHTENMENT	1732	Pope's *Essay on Man*
	1740	Marquis de Sade b.
	1764	The 'Ossian Forgery'
	1770	William Wordsworth b. (English Romantic poet)
ROMANTICISM	1792	Percy Bysshe Shelley b.
	1797	Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan'
	1850	
MODERN PERIOD	1900c.	Sigmund Freud's major work begins
	1910-1930	Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot active (Modernist poets and critics)
	1930s	Milman Parry's 'Study of Yugoslav singers'
	1930-1960	F.R. and Q.D. Leavis active (English critics)
	1960	Albert Lord (*The Singer of Tales*)